July is UV Safety Month

While some exposure to sunlight can be enjoyable, too much is dangerous, causing immediate effects like blistering sunburns, as well as longer-term problems like eye damage.

Ultraviolet radiation is composed of high-energy rays from the sun. Long-term exposure to ultraviolet radiation ("sunburn rays") may contribute to the development of various eye disorders, such as age-related macular degeneration, the leading cause of vision loss among older Americans, and cataracts, a major cause of visual impairment and blindness around the world.

It is important to protect your eyes from acute damage caused even by single outings on very bright days. Intense, excessive exposure to ultraviolet light reflected off sand, snow or pavement can damage the eye’s surface. Similar to sunburns, eye surface burns usually disappear within a couple of days, but may lead to further complications later in life.

Everyone is at risk for eye damage that can lead to vision loss from exposure to the sun. Any factor that increases your exposure to sunlight will increase your risk.

To ensure your eyes are protected, wear sunglasses and a broad-rimmed hat. When selecting sunglasses, make sure they block 99 to 100 percent of UV-A and UV-B rays. But don’t be deceived by color or cost. The ability to block UV light is not dependent on the darkness of the lens or the price tag. You must remember to wear them whenever you’re outside. Don’t be fooled by a cloudy day. The sun’s rays can still burn through the haze and thin clouds.

Also, while out enjoying the sun in the water, remember to wear swimming goggles whenever and wherever you swim. Chlorine can make your eyes red and puffy, and ponds and lakes may have bacteria that can get underneath contact lenses and cause inflammation of the cornea.

Don’t forget the kids. Children should also wear hats and sunglasses and try to stay out of the sun between 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m., when the sun’s ultraviolet rays are the strongest.

So when you step outside, remember to protect your eyes.

Test Your Sun-Safety IQ and Learn How to Save Your Skin

Following is a quiz to test your sun-safety IQ. Answer the questions below to see how much you really know about the sun and its effects on the skin:

1. I can’t get skin cancer because my routine (work, drive to work, indoor hobbies and vacations) doesn’t include any outdoor activities.
   TRUE  FALSE

2. If I’m wearing sunscreen, I can stay in the sun as long as I want.
   TRUE  FALSE

3. A sunscreen labeled SPF 30 blocks twice as much ultraviolet (UV) radiation as one labeled SPF 15.
   TRUE  FALSE

4. Getting a “base tan” at an indoor tanning salon is a good way to prevent sunburn when I go to the beach later this summer.
   TRUE  FALSE

5. What are the two most common (and painful) sunscreen mistakes?
   A Choosing an SPF below 15 and missing spots
   B Using too little and waiting too long to reapply
   (See answers on page 4)
Did You Know?

According to a report in the Archives of Physical Medicine, many people don’t bend their knees when lifting because it takes more energy. In a study involving 20 healthy volunteers, heart rates went up more when they raised and lowered a box by squatting compared to bending over from the waist. The extra energy required to lift safely could explain why people risk back strain by lifting with straight legs. About 80 percent of adults are pained by lower back problems at some point. Bending knees and keeping the back straight when lifting is worth the extra effort to avoid the pain, say experts.

Working Outdoors

Hot summer months pose special hazards for outdoor workers who must protect themselves against heat, sun exposure, and other hazards. Employers and employees should know the potential hazards in their workplaces and how to manage them.

Heat

The combination of heat and humidity can be a serious health threat during the summer months. If you work outside, in a kitchen, or bakery for example, you may be at risk for heat-related illness. So take precautions. Here’s how:

- Drink plenty of water before you get thirsty.
- Wear light, loose-fitting, breathable clothing—cotton is good.
- Take frequent short breaks in cool shade.
- Avoid caffeine and alcohol or large amounts of sugar.
- Find out from your health-care provider if your medications and heat don’t mix.
- Know that equipment such as respirators or work suits can increase heat stress.

Lyme Disease

This illness is caused by bites from infected ticks. Most, but not all, victims will develop a “bulls-eye” rash. Other signs and symptoms may be non-specific and similar to flu symptoms such as fever, lymph node swelling, neck stiffness, generalized fatigue, headaches, migrating joint aches, or muscle aches. You are at increased risk if your work outdoors involves construction, landscaping, forestry, brush clearing, land surveying, farming, railroads, oil fields, utility lines, or park and wildlife management. Protect yourself with these precautions:

- Wear light-colored clothes to see ticks more easily.
- Wear long sleeves; tuck pant legs into socks or boots.
- Wear high boots or closed shoes that cover your feet completely.
- Wear a hat.
- Use tick repellants, but not on your face.
- Shower after working outside. Wash and dry your clothes at high temperature.
- Examine your body for ticks. Remove any attached ticks promptly with fine-tipped tweezers. Do not use petroleum jelly, a hot match, or nail polish to remove the tick.

West Nile Virus

Illness from the West Nile virus is rare, but it does happen. Mild symptoms include fever, headache, and body aches, occasionally with a skin rash on the trunk of the body and swollen lymph glands. Symptoms of severe infection include headache, high fever, neck stiffness, stupor, disorientation, coma, tremors, convulsions, muscle weakness, and paralysis. Getting rid of standing water in containers such as discarded tires, buckets, and barrels helps reduce mosquito breeding areas. In addition, you can protect yourself from mosquito bites in these ways:

- Apply insect repellent with DEET to exposed skin.
- Spray clothing with repellents containing DEET or permethrin.
- Wear long sleeves, long pants, and socks.
- Be extra vigilant at dusk and dawn when mosquitoes are most active.
Hazmat Checkup

Title 8 of the California Code of Regulations requires employers to provide information about workplace hazardous materials to their employees through a Hazard Communication Program. This type of program provides a format for disclosing and discussing any hazardous substances known to be present in the workplace under normal conditions, and any which could be used during any reasonably foreseeable workplace emergency.

Using a 5-step checkup process, employers can use the following suggestions to identify and evaluate any hazardous materials in the workplace:

1. **Inventory** – Before you can communicate with your employees, you must have an accurate list of the chemicals. Inventory the chemicals on site and record what you have. Properly dispose of any chemicals that are questionable or no longer needed. Contact your local waste management department for disposal assistance. There are strict disposal and transportation regulations you should be aware of before proceeding.

2. **Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS)** – These helpful information sheets tell you how to use, handle and store substances safely. They also include emergency and first-aid procedures. MSDS should be easily accessible to all who need them, so check the location of your site MSDS binder and be sure it is kept current. If you do not have a copy of the MSDS, contact the manufacturer or distributor of the substance.

3. **Labeling** – All containers must be properly labeled. Ensure that secondary containers, such as spray bottles used by custodians or staff, are properly labeled with the contents. Be specific. Just labeling something “cleaner” is not sufficient.

4. **Training** – Teach you staff how to properly handle the substances and how to use personal protective equipment. Explain first-aid procedures in case of an accident. Review the use and location of MSDS. Training should be done for all new employees and when a new chemical is introduced. It is also smart to do an annual training to review past lessons. Be sure to document all training and attendees.

5. **Written Program** – Your site’s written program should include the inventory of materials on site, training records, and policies and procedures related to the handling, storage and maintenance of hazardous substances. Your district may be able to assist with programs specific to your site.

Laptop Users Feeling the Pain

Persistent back, neck, shoulder and wrist aches are becoming increasingly common for millions of laptop users. Use of the small, lightweight computers is burgeoning as the wireless Internet has become commonplace.

A special report in *USA Today* describes one 29-year-old saleswoman who spends “much of the day hunched over her keyboard at coffee shops, on planes, in bed, even in cabs.” She complains of pain in the neck and wrists; her doctor says she has the skeletal health of someone 20 years older.

The report says although no nationwide studies have been conducted, doctors and physical therapists point to the fact that keyboards and screens on laptops are too close to one another for comfort.

One ergonomist explains that while using a laptop, it is possible to get the head and neck comfortable, or to get the arms and hands comfortable, but not both.

The fix, say the experts, is to use accessories aimed at making the laptop experience more similar to using a desktop computer. Among devices are wireless mice and keyboards and stands that prop up the laptop.
Sun Safety IQ Test Answers
(Continued from page 1)

1. False – Dermatologists say brief sun exposures all year round can add up to significant damage for people with fair skin. The sun’s ultraviolet rays do pass through car windows, so driving during peak sun hours, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., to lunch or on weekends, bathes your hands and arms in damaging UV rays.

2. False – It’s not smart to broil in the sun for several hours, even if you are wearing sunscreen. These products don’t provide total protection from UV rays. The American Cancer Society recommends that people seek shade and limit time in the sun at midday. Also, cover up with a shirt, wear a wide-brimmed hat, and use a sunscreen rated SPF 15 or higher. And don’t forget sunglasses for eye protection.

3. False – The Sun Protection Factor (SPF) describes how long a product will protect your skin, if you apply the sunscreen correctly. Fair-skinned people begin to burn in about 15 minutes on a sunny day, so wearing an SPF 15 sunscreen (if applied and reapplied properly) would prevent sunburn for about 225 minutes (15x15=225). The SPF 30 sunscreen should last for 450 minutes. In practical use, you’ll need to reapply sunscreen every two hours. Be sure to choose a broad spectrum product that blocks UVB and UVA light.

4. False – Experts say a “base tan” gives you very little protection against sunburn. And that goes for indoor tans, too, which provide a sun-protection factor of 4, much less than most sunscreens. So, in practice, a base tan may increase the chance of getting a burn, because you’re likely to stay out longer without properly protecting your skin. Also, tanning itself injures the skin. What you don’t see is UV damage to deeper layers, where it accumulates from every tan and burn you’ve ever had. There is no such thing as a “safe tan.”

5. B – A study of Texas beachgoers found most people who used sunscreen came home with a sunburn anyway, thanks to those two mistakes. Adults need an ounce of sunscreen to cover their arms, legs, face, hands, neck and ears. Spreading it too thin cuts the protection in half and sunscreen should be applied every two hours or more often.

Preventing Workplace Falls

If you walk, you’re at risk. Slips, trips, and falls happen in every workplace, from corporate environments to manufacturing plants. However, most fall-related injuries happen in the service industry – and most fall-related deaths occur on construction sites.

Follow these tips to avoid serious injury from a fall:

- Keep all aisles, stairs and walkways free of clutter.
- Open cabinet drawers are a tripping hazard; keep them closed when you’re not using them.
- Turn on the lights before you enter a room. And report any burned-out bulbs to housekeeping as soon as possible.
- Always use handrails on the stairs, and take one step at a time.
- Broken stairs or loose stair coverings? Report them right away!
- Make wide turns around corners, so you can see who’s coming.
- If you spot a spill, clean it up or report it immediately.
- Stay away from shortcuts. The route less traveled may be less safe!
- Don’t overload – take only what you can carry comfortably, and make sure you can see over it.
- When walking on a wet or slippery surface, slow down, take small steps, and keep a hand free for balance.
- Make sure chains, guardrails, or warning tapes are in place around elevated areas.
- Keep all harnesses and other fall protection equipment in working order, and use them correctly.
- Wear the right shoes for the job, and keep the soles clean for better traction.