

Hit the slopes, but slap on the sunscreen

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If you are one of the estimated 10 million skiers or snowboarders hitting the slopes this winter season, remember to pack your sunscreen. It is easy to think that being in a cold environment does not put you at risk for sunburn, when in fact ultraviolet (UV) rays can be even more damaging on the slopes than on the beach.



Skiers and snowboarders may be unaware of the dangers they face from

the sun while on the slopes. For every 1,000 feet of elevation, ultraviolet exposure increases by about 8 to 10 percent. So a skier with an average complexion, at 11,000 feet above sea level in Colorado, will burn at noon after six minutes of unprotected sun exposure, compared to 14 minutes in Orlando. In addition, snow reflects about 80 percent of the ultraviolet light from the sun, only compounding the problem and further increasing the risk for skin cancer.

"Statistics show that fewer than 20 percent of Americans wear sunscreen all year-round," said Perry Robins, MD, president of the Skin Cancer Foundation. "That is not enough, considering the sun shines 12 months a year and UV rays are present year-round no matter what season, altitude, temperature or time of day."

To protect yourself this ski season, follow these important sun protection tips:

1) Use sunscreen whenever you spend time outdoors. Both snow and strong wind can reduce the effectiveness of sunscreen, so remember to:

I Use a broad-spectrum sunscreen with an SPF of 15 or higher.

I Apply sunscreen liberally and evenly to all exposed skin.

I Be sure to cover often-missed spots: lips, ears, around eyes, neck, scalp and hands.

I Reapply at least every 90 minutes, and more often after sweating or exposure to wind and snow.

2) Cover up:

I Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants. Tightly woven fabrics and dark colors offer more protection.

I Wear UV-blocking sunglasses with wraparound or large frames protect your

eyelids and the sensitive skin around your eyes, common sites for skin cancer and sun-induced aging.

3) Be mindful of time spent in the sun, regardless of the season:

| Keep track of the time you spend in full sunlight.

| If you are on the slopes for most of the day, take a few breaks indoors to reapply sunscreen.

| Drink plenty of water to avoid dehydration from the sun.

Always remember, in ice and snow wear a hat, sunscreen and lip balm, and slip on some sunglasses to cut down on the sun's reflection. To find out more about how to protect yourself from the sun this winter and all year-round, visit www.skincancer.org or call (800) SKIN-490.

The Skin Cancer Foundation is the only national and international organization concerned exclusively with the world's most common malignancy - cancer of the skin. The mission of this non-profit organization is to increase public and professional awareness about the prevention, early detection and treatment of skin cancer.