



AGING TODAY

Radiating Your Inner Glow



By Bob Roth, Managing Partner of Cypress HomeCare Solutions

Who wakes up in the morning, looks in the mirror and thinks, “Wow, I wish I had spent more time in the sun when I was younger?” Who can remember a time when suntan lotion did not even have an SPF number? The constellation of freckles taking up permanent residence on our epidermis is proof that we baby boomers did not know any better. So how can we explain that despite all we know about the detrimental effects of UV radiation from the sun, our kids and grandkids continue to chase Apollo’s golden chariot?

May is skin Cancer Awareness Month and here in the Valley of the Sun we have on average 299 sunny days per year. This means that even if we aren’t actively seeking the savage tan, exposure to harmful UV radiation is a reality we must actively seek to prevent. Millions of Americans receive a large portion of their sun exposure when they don’t even realize it — in their cars. Ultraviolet A (UVA) radiation can penetrate through car windows. Windshields are specially treated to block UVB and UVA as well, but a car’s side and rear windows allow UVA to penetrate.

Dermatologists have found that consistent with these findings you can observe whether a person is a passenger or driver for the majority of their lifetime based on the amount of sun damage to the left or right side of the body. UV exposure is cumulative, and research has proven that skin exposed to sun shining through window glass, even in the office, can over time lead to significant skin damage.

Remember even if you are a moving target, you are still susceptible to the sun’s harmful radiation. In and out of the car can add up to a long walk during peak UV index. Exposure is cumulative, from year to year as well as from hour to hour.

Self examination for changes in moles and freckles can hold the key to prevention. At skincancer.org you can download a printable body map and self-examination schedule to keep track of any spots that you notice on your body.

What to look for:

- a skin growth that increases in size and appears pearly, translucent, tan, brown, black, or multicolored
- a mole, birthmark, beauty mark, or any brown spot that:
 - changes color
 - increases in size or thickness
 - changes in texture
 - is irregular in outline
 - is bigger than 6mm or 1/4”, the size of a pencil eraser
 - appears after age 21
- a spot or sore that continues to itch, hurt, crust, scab, erode, or bleed
- an open sore that does not heal within three weeks

UV radiation from the sun also can harm your eyes. Extended exposure to the sun’s UV rays has been linked to eye damage including cataracts and macular degeneration. Wearing the right sunglasses, not necessarily the most fashionable pair is necessary for protection. The single most important thing to look for when buying sunglasses for eye protection from the sun is look for a sticker or tag indicating that they block 100 percent of UV rays. It’s easy to think that the dark lens is protective, which is a false sense of security. Sunglasses are a fun and easy solution. Now if only we could stop leaving them everywhere.

These reminders are helpful, and with all these life experiences under our belt, I am pretty sure that I am preaching to the choir. My readers are packing a 50 pound suitcase for a vacation with 10 pounds of sunblock. How do we convince our kids, the young adults not under our supervision anymore? As parents and grandparents it is so frustrating. I think to myself: I slathered you with lotion, cut your grapes in half so you wouldn't choke, kept you in your car seat until you were practically old enough to drive and look what you are doing to that beautiful young skin!

This barrier between us and the environment can only stay at peak efficiency of good health with proper precautions. Retaining the youthful appearance is really the icing on the cake. If we could only help our youth understand that most people who are unhappy with how their skin is aging can cite sun damage as their chief complaint.

The irony is that many would want to turn back the clock to the skin they had in their 20's which is the demographic whose mantra is: the person with the darkest tan wins. How do we as a society reset the ideal of beauty from sun kissed to radiating your inner glow? I wish I had the answer.

We can start by walking the walk and talking the talk. Be an exemplar of sun wise habits. Avoid compliments such as, "what a great tan." Tell your story if you have suffered from skin cancers or mole removals. As life so often comes full circle I am reminded of the saying: "Youth is wasted on the young," which I just found out writing this column is by George Bernard Shaw and not my mother.

This column was published in [Lovin' Life After 50](#) and [Jewish News](#) as Cypress' monthly contribution.