Are You Using Toxic Sunscreen?

by Dr. Andrew T. Brady

Skin cancer is the most common cancer in the U.S. Between 1973 and 2003, malignant melanoma increased by 83%, and it continues to increase at a rate of 3% per year. We have all heard that we should apply sunscreen to prevent skin cancer, but a number of published studies suggest that applying sunscreen doesn't significantly decrease the risk and may even increase it.

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A 2006 publication from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency stated "there is no evidence that sunscreens protect you from malignant melanoma." Contrary to the research, huge efforts have been made to increase the use of sunscreens that block UVA and UVB radiation.

Meanwhile, many of the widely used commercial sunscreens contain ingredients that are harmful. Some of the most common toxic sunscreen chemicals are avobenzone, oxybenzone, phthalates and parabens. Studies show that when avobenzone is exposed to sunlight, it creates carbon-centered free radicals and damages DNA. This alone is a significant risk factor for skin cancer.

A few studies have also found that oxybenzone can penetrate the skin and enter the bloodstream. This chemical has been shown to disrupt hormones and mimic the effects of estrogen. Also, due to its UVA- and UVB-blocking ability, oxybenzone prevents the production of vitamin D. Vitamin D deficiency is another risk factor for malignant melanoma, as well as a number of other diseases. Humans have produced vitamin D through UVB exposure since the beginning of time. In the proper amount, UVB rays are essential for health.

In addition, some of the latest research considers phthalates and parabens "probable human carcinogens." The scary thing is that a lot of these toxic sunscreens are deemed "dermatologist approved/recommended."

The good news is that there are a number of different sunscreens that do not contain any of these toxic chemicals and are just as effective at preventing sunburns. One of my favorites is The Honest Company sunscreen. This sunscreen does not contain any parabens, phthalates, benzone's or any other known cancer causing chemicals. I always wait at least 20 minutes before applying sunscreen so that my body has a chance to produce a sufficient amount of natural vitamin D.

Next time you need sunscreen, consider buying one without all the toxic chemicals. Your body will thank you!

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