



# Health Matters

a monthly publication of the  
**Farmington Valley Health District**  
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Skin cancer is the most common cancer in the United States. Fortunately it is also one of the most preventable. Basal and squamous cell skin cancers are the most common and are highly curable but can be disfiguring. Melanoma is less common but accounts for the most skin cancer deaths. Almost 90% of non-melanoma cancers and 85% of melanoma skin cancers are associated with exposure to ultra violet light, specifically the sun and tanning beds. Protecting skin from the harmful effects of the ultraviolet light is critically important to preventing skin cancer.

## Protect Yourself and Your Family:

### Shade:

- Seek out shady spaces particularly between 10am and 4pm when the sun is at its hottest.
- Keep newborns under 6 months out of the sun entirely.

### Clothing:

- Wear a hat and light long sleeve shirt especially when spending extended time outdoors.
- Avoid tanning and never use UV tanning beds.
- Use swimming tops for children or all in one swimming suits to provide maximum protection.
- Wear sunglasses to protect eyes.

**Use a broad spectrum (UVA/UVB) sunscreen:**

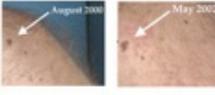
- Use a sunscreen with an SPF of 15 or higher every day.
- For extended outdoor activity, use a water-resistant, broad spectrum (UVA/UVB) sunscreen with an SPF of 30 or higher.
- Apply sunscreen 30 minutes before going outside and reapply after swimming or excessive sweating. Follow the manufacturer instructions.
- Pay attention to expiration dates, old product may be less effective.

**Early Detection is Critical:**

- Do regular head to toe self-skin checks
- Consult your doctor if you have a new or changing skin mark
- Schedule periodic evaluation with a dermatologist

## Recognize the Warning Signs

<https://www.skincancer.org/skin-cancer-information/melanoma/melanoma-warning-signs-and-images/do-you-know-your-abcdes>

A - Asymmetry		When a lesion or mark is not symmetrical it is a warning sign of melanoma
B - Border		Smooth, even borders are more likely to be benign, irregular jagged borders are a warning sign.
C - Color		Uniform color of a mark is more likely to be benign, a variety of colors is a warning sign. Melanomas can be red, blue or white as well.
D - Diameter		Benign moles usually have a smaller diameter than malignant ones.
E - Evolving		Benign moles tend to look the same over time. Be aware of changing or evolving moles and consult your health care adviser to have a skin check.

Learning how to perform a self-skin monthly check will help you to identify any changes in your skin early, so that you can consult your healthcare professional for a more intensive skin exam. Remember to have a loved one look at your back and other areas that are difficult to see. Remember skin cancer is the most common and curable form of cancer in the USA – but it needs to be found and treated early. Prevention of over exposure to UV light is the most important form of protection for you and your family – so enjoy the summer responsibly and remember to do your monthly skin checks.

If you are concerned about any markings on your skin, please see your medical provider and make sure that you have a full skin exam.

To learn more about sun safety and skin cancer view our *Health Matters* Episode: <https://youtu.be/XPR8KejXUPY>



## Celebrate National Physical Fitness Month

Most people understand that healthy eating and regular physical activity can prevent injury, disability and early death from many chronic conditions including heart disease, stroke, some cancers, diabetes,

*click the photo to learn more*

depression and osteoporosis. Despite this, most people do not get enough exercise and often make too many unhealthy food choices. In Connecticut, only 53% of adults get the recommended 150 minutes or more of aerobic exercise per week.

### What's Keeping YOU???

Incorporating more physical activity into your day is not hard! Here are some suggestions to get you started:

- Explore new trails for hiking and biking in the Farmington Valley. Maps can be found at: <http://www.fvgreenway.org>
- Walk instead of drive, whenever you can
- Walk your children to school
- Take the stairs instead of the escalator or elevator
- Take a family walk after dinner
- Go for a half-hour walk instead of watching TV
- Park farther from the store and walk
- Make a Saturday morning walk a family habit
- Find a buddy or a team to keep you motivated
- Do yard work. Get your children to help rake, weed, or plant
- Join an exercise group, and enroll your children in community sports teams or lessons
- Do sit-ups in front of the TV. Have a sit-up competition with your kids
- Pace the sidelines at kids' athletic games
- Use an exercise video if the weather is bad
- Choose activities you enjoy
- For the more competitive spirits, consider signing up for an organized race or bike ride—there are many scheduled throughout the Farmington Valley.
- Join the National Bike Challenge, an on-line initiative to track your bicycling miles while qualifying for prizes. More information at: [www.nationalbikechallenge.org](http://www.nationalbikechallenge.org)

**See you on the trails!**

## Salon Safety

It's almost officially flip-flop and sandal weather. For many of us this means a trip to the nail salon or spa for a *much* needed pedicure. To help protect the health and safety of consumers, all salons in the Farmington Valley Health District are permitted and regularly inspected by the health department. During inspections, sanitarians observe technicians to ensure that they are using proper



sanitary practices, the most important aspect of preventing the spread of dangerous fungal and bacterial diseases from one client to the next. As a consumer, you too should be aware of the practices that might place you at increased risk. Here are some tips to further protect yourself from a possible complications and/or safety risk.



- Don't shave your legs prior to a pedicure! The act of shaving opens the skin follicles and makes it easier for bacteria to enter the skin.
- Ask how they keep the instruments they use for manicures and pedicures clean. All the tools should be disposable or cleaned and disinfected (including foot basins) **each** time they are used.
- Look around to see if the salon is neat and clean. Make sure the technicians wash their hands between each manicure or pedicure.
- Make sure the technicians never use a sharp blade to cut skin or remove calluses. These instruments can cause open wounds which may lead to infections.
- Don't schedule a treatment if you have a fungal infection, open wound, or are in an immunocompromised state. Diabetics should consult with their physicians and arrange for a "diabetic pedicure" which is non-abrasive.
- Let your nails dry naturally or ensure that the drying lamps are LED only. If UV light is used, particularly for gel nail polish, be aware this exposure to UV light increases the risk of skin cancer.

Photo Credits: Nailsmagazine.com, Amazon.com, and Safety and Health Magazine.com



## No Wrong Door: Creating Communities that Support Veterans

The number of people reporting mental health challenges and mental illness is increasing and men, veterans, active duty military and their families are at increases risk. Creating communities that foster good mental health and are knowledgeable about and sensitive to mental illness is something the health district is committed to. Through *Resilience Grows Here*, an initiative of the health district, NO WRONG DOORS conference was held on April 26th in collaboration with Tunxis Community College and their veteran Oasis Center.

Approximately 100 participants, mostly those that work with veterans and their families, learned about the unique challenges faced by veterans and active duty military as they reintegrate back into communities, academic settings and employment.



For attendees, it provided an excellent opportunity to learn about the resources available to support veterans, their family members or others who may be experiencing mental health challenges. Experts in the area of traumatic brain injury, post-traumatic stress and mental illness helped participants get a better understanding of the sign, symptoms and challenges of these conditions and what we all as lay-people can do to better support those who may be experiencing these conditions.



Unfortunately suicide rates are continuing to rise in the U.S and our veteran population is particularly susceptible. The event also provided an opportunity for everyone to be trained in QPR--Question, Persuade, Refer--a suicide prevention program that teaches the public how to identify the early signs of suicidal ideation, how to ask the question of someone who you suspect may be contemplating taking their life and how to get them the support they need.

Photo Credit: Melissa Marquis, Sarah Altieri



May you have a meaningful Memorial Day and may the words “Never Forget” be offered to the families of the fallen to those who have lost their battle buddy in war and back at home.

Do your part to support our veterans, active duty military, their families and those who have given the ultimate sacrifice.

Learn more about *Resilience Grows Here (RGH)*

Become QPR Suicide Prevention Trained

Take a Mental Health First Aid Class

Connect a veteran to RGH for peer support and access to services

Become a champion for mental health and help us break down the stigma.

Our fallen have a legacy that must not be ignored. Memorial Day offers us all an opportunity to be deliberate in our appreciation in the remembrance of there sons and daughters that gave their lives.

*“Every name... is a lightning strike to some heart, and breaks like thunder over some home, and falls a long black shadow across some hearthstone”.* The Gettysburg Complier, July 7<sup>th</sup>, 1863 on the killed and wounded at Gettysburg.



**The health department strives to prevent disease outbreaks and conditions that give rise to poor health, promote health programs and policies that support good health, and protect members of our community from health threats.**

