



Preventing skin cancer

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BOSTON (WHDH) - We all love some fun in the sun, but our skin does not.

Protecting against the sun's harmful UV rays is crucial. Just ask 37-year-old Jenni Dessert, whose family recently had a skin cancer scare.

"Just in the last few months, I've had a family member with melanoma. Since then, my siblings and I have been encouraged to visit a dermatologist, and apply sunscreen, which we all have. It's scary when it's someone in your family," she said.

Dessert said she spent her childhood in the sun, and it wasn't until her 30s that she got checked out.

"I grew up using sunscreen moderately, not as much as I should. Family and friends encouraged me, 'you should see a dermatologist, and get stuff checked,'" she said.

That's where dermatologist Emmy Graber of Boston Medical Center came in.

"Skin cancer is definitely on the rise, especially in young people, in 20s it's becoming more and more common. It's estimated 1 in 5 Americans at some point in their lifetime are going to have a skin cancer of some type," Graber said.

She recommended regular skin checks.

"Basel cell carcinoma, is the most common, looks like a little pink bump, or a pimple that doesn't go away easily. Melanoma is life-threatening, often looks like a darker colored mole, with different colors in it, and edges are usually irregular," she said.

Graber said early prevention was key.

"Anyone who is 6 months or older should use sunscreen. Best to look for 30 or higher," she said, regarding SPF of sunscreen. She said that 30 blocks out 97 percent of the sun's rays, and it's ideal to look for something that blocks both UVA and UVB light.

For Jenni and her family, the cancer scare was enough to get them all to make sunscreen a daily part of their lives.

"It's just one of those things you need to remember to do, because eventually down the road you are going to wish you had," she said.

Another thing to remember is to find water-resistant sunscreen and to apply it everywhere, including the ears.

For more information on skin cancer and free health screenings head to the 7News Health Expo at the Hynes Convention Center on June 14-15.

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