

Sun Exposure and Skin Health: A Puerto Rican Perspective

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Puerto Rico is a tropical island with beautiful beaches located in the Caribbean. The weather remains summer-like all year long, attracting both Puerto Ricans and tourists to visit the beach and achieve a tan. However, the reality is that every instance of sun exposure carries a risk of developing skin cancer. According to the Skin Cancer Foundation, one in five Americans develop skin cancer by the age of 70, and experiencing more than five sunburns doubles the risk of developing melanoma.

But how does this impact the skin? We know that exposure to ultraviolet (UV) light from the sun results in a reddish appearance or darker skin color, but deeper still, it is the formation of pyrimidine dimers in DNA that has the potential to lead to mutation and cancer (Kemp & Sancar, 2012). This explains why the skin darkens or reddens, as it produces more melanin, leading to cell apoptosis, which is a self-mechanism effect (Van Laethem et al., 2005).

How can we prevent skin cancer? According to the American Academy of Dermatology Association, by avoiding direct contact with the sun, especially between 10 am and 2 pm, using sun-protective clothing with ultraviolet protection factor (UPF), and, last but not least, wearing sun protection factor (SPF) 30 or higher sunscreen. By taking these steps you can continue to enjoy responsibly activities such as: going to the beach, running outside, or appreciating nature. However, getting a sunburn or a tan means our skin cells are suffering and potentially mutating. Early prevention saves lives.

References

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