SAFE Summer
What Have You Done to Save a Life Today?
U.S. ARMY COMBAT READINESS/SAFETY CENTER

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Hot fun in the summertime

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There you are, sitting at the beach. Warm sunshine beats down on you and your family or buddies and, for now anyway, things are great.

Flash forward several decades and there you are, sitting in the dermatologist's office, listening to the good doctor explain, guess what, all that sun you soaked up years ago is now a problem.

If only you had worn sunscreen whenever you went to the beach or were outside working in the yard or on your car or in the field as a Soldier, you may not have this problem. But, now it's too late for whining.

Your Army Leaders talked to you about the importance of wearing sunscreen, but you didn't always do it and you've learned that while sunshine can be your year-round friend, it can also be your year-round enemy, too.

Know your enemy: According to the Skin Cancer Foundation, while both Ultraviolet A and Ultraviolet B rays can harm the skin and lead to skin cancers, UVB is effectively blocked by glass. However, at least 50 percent of UVA radiation can pass through windows. Car windows have been proven to let in more than 60 percent.

"Our knowledge of the dangers associated with the sun's longer-wave UVA rays has grown significantly over the last few decades," said Dr. Perry Robins, president, Skin Cancer Foundation. "We now know that UVA radiation can penetrate windows to reach the skin, accelerating skin aging."

To protect yourself, be sure to use a broad-spectrum sunscreen with a sun protection factor of 15 or higher. Window film, which can be applied to home, office and car windows, blocks almost 100 percent of UVA and UVB radiation, says the foundation spokesperson.

Information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention tells us skin cancer, usually attributed to sun exposure, is the most common form of cancer in the United States.

In 2007, the most recent year CDCP numbers are available:

- 58,094 people in the United States were diagnosed with melanomas of the skin, including 33,041 men and 25,053 women.
- 8,461 people in the United States died from melanomas of the skin, including 5,506 men and 2,955 women.

Know your UV Index: The National Weather Service and the Environmental Protection Agency developed the UV Index to forecast the risk of overexposure to UV rays. It lets you know how much caution you should take when working, playing, or exercising outdoors.

The UV Index predicts exposure levels on a 1–15 scale; higher levels indicate a higher risk of overexposure. Calculated on a next-day basis for dozens of cities across the United States, the UV Index takes into account clouds and other local conditions that affect the amount of UV rays reaching the ground.

The threat of damage to your skin from exposure to the sun doesn’t mean you can’t go to the beach or lake or be outside. Just protect yourself for hot fun in the summertime.

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