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## Let's All Be "Sunbright"

Because about 98 percent of people in Kearney, Franklin, Phelps, Gosper, Harlan, and Furnas counties are white, their risk is higher for damage from the sun than in many areas of the United States. Even considering Nebraska overall, one of the highest-risk states for getting and/or dying from skin cancer, this region is much more predominantly white than our state's 89.1 percent of population.

Each year, there are more cases of skin cancer than combined incidents of cancers of the breast, prostate, colon, and lung. With skin that easily burns, a person has to protect against damage the sun will most definitely do.

While it is too late to undo the damage already done on your skin in early years, making efforts to prevent further damage could save your life! Also, it is not too late for your children. Follow these guidelines from the Skin Cancer Foundation for the best protection:

**Seek the shade**, especially between 10 AM and 4 PM.

**Don't let yourself burn!** Each time the sun burns your skin, the chances of skin cancer rise.

**Avoid tanning** and UV tanning beds. People who have tanned indoors at some point in their lives have a 69 percent risk of developing basal cell carcinoma (the most frequently occurring form of skin cancer) before age 40. People who first use a tanning bed before age 35 increase their risk for melanoma by 75 percent.

**Cover up** with light clothing, including a broad-brimmed hat for ear coverage and UV-blocking sunglasses.

**Use a broad spectrum (that means one that protects against both UVA/UVB rays) sunscreen** with a Sun Protection Factor (SPF) of 15 or higher every day. The SPF number refers to the sunscreen's ability to block out the sun's burning rays. Contrary to popular belief, the number does not determine the effectiveness of the sunscreen based on time in the sun. The time spent in the sun is only one factor in how fast a person burns. Other factors include things like time of day, weather, and your location. For extended outdoor activity, it is best to use a water-resistant, broad spectrum sunscreen with an SPF of 30 or higher. Adults should apply one ounce (two tablespoons) of sunscreen to the entire body, 30 minutes before going outside. Reapply every two hours, or immediately after swimming or heavy sweating.

**Keep newborns out of the sun**, but also keep them out of shade near water, as reflection will cause burning. Use sunscreen on babies over the age of six months.

**Examine your skin head-to-toe** every month and have annual professional skin exams, especially if you are prone to skin damage or have many moles.

Looking back at the title of this article: What is the definition of "sunbright"? It is having a brightness that rivals the sun, according to the Merriam-Webster dictionary. Let's all be sunbright and fight damage of the sun with knowledge and planning!

*Nebraska Extension is a Division of the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln cooperating with the Counties and the United States Department of Agriculture.*