Summer heat raises risk of skin cancer

As summer temperatures rise, health experts warn that stronger ultraviolet radiation, known as UV, can significantly increase the risk of skin cancer, often through damage that builds silently over time.

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UV radiation is an invisible form of energy emitted by the sun. Although it cannot be seen, it can penetrate the skin and damage cells.



There are two main types of UV rays that affect the skin: UVA rays penetrate deeper into the skin and are linked to premature aging, wrinkles, and long-term cellular changes; UVB rays mainly affect the skin's surface and are the primary cause of sunburn. Together, both can damage DNA inside skin cells, increasing the likelihood of mutations that may later develop into cancer.

Health studies estimate that about 90% of skin cancer cases are linked to UV exposure from sunlight. Global rates of the disease have also risen in recent decades, particularly for non-melanoma skin cancers, according to the Suc khoe & Doi song news site.

Summer conditions can intensify that risk. In Vietnam and many tropical countries, the UV index can climb to very high or extreme levels during the hottest months. Experts say the most dangerous period is often between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m., when solar radiation is strongest. Environmental conditions can worsen exposure. Sunlight reflected from sand, water, roads, or concrete can increase the amount of UV reaching the skin. Higher altitudes and clear skies can also increase radiation levels. Notably, even on cloudy or cool days, UV rays can still penetrate clouds and harm the skin.

When skin is exposed to UV radiation for long periods, cells can suffer DNA damage. If the body cannot repair that damage, it may accumulate and lead to mutations, the first step in cancer development. This process often occurs silently over many years, so many people do not realize it until the disease has progressed. People who are frequently exposed to sunlight, such as outdoor workers, athletes, or those who rarely use skin protection, face higher risk.

Skin cancer can often be detected early if people watch for unusual skin changes, including:

New spots or unusual colored marks
Sores that do not heal
Moles that change in size, color, or shape
Skin that bleeds, itches, or becomes painful unexpectedly
Experts emphasize that early detection can improve treatment outcomes and reduce the risk of serious complications.
Those at greater risk include outdoor workers, athletes, construction crews, farmers and others who spend long hours in direct sunlight. People with fair skin, a history of repeated sunburn or weakened immune systems may also face higher vulnerability.
Despite repeated health warnings, many people still underestimate daily exposure. Common mistakes include skipping sunscreen, using protection only during visibly hot weather, assuming being inside a vehicle is fully safe, or neglecting protection during beach trips and outdoor exercise.
To reduce risk, health professionals recommend limiting time outdoors during peak midday hours when possible. Broad-spectrum sunscreen with SPF30 or higher should be applied generously and reapplied every two to three hours, especially after sweating or swimming. Protective clothing such as long sleeves, widebrimmed hats, and UV-blocking sunglasses can provide an additional layer of defense.
Nutrition may also help support skin health. Diets rich in fruits, vegetables and other antioxidant-containing foods are often recommended as part of overall prevention, though they do not replace sun protection. Skin cancer is among the more preventable forms of cancer, but prevention depends on consistent habits. During summer, when UV radiation reaches seasonal highs, small daily choices can make a meaningful difference.