

## Preventing Skin Cancer by Reducing Exposure to Ultraviolet Light

Exposure to the sun's ultraviolet (UV) rays appears to be the most preventable factor in the development of skin cancer. Skin cancer is largely preventable when sun protection measures are used consistently. Melanoma, the most serious type of skin cancer, will account for about 54,200 cases of skin cancer in 2003 and most of the deaths due to skin cancer. Most skin cancer is related to unprotected sun exposure. However, less than one third of youth aged 11-18 practiced any sun protection behavior, and only 31% of adults surveyed in 1998 reported wearing protective clothing, staying the shade or using sunscreen. These results highlight the need for effective interventions that reduce harmful UV light exposures.

The independent Task Force on Community Preventive Services has completed a systematic review of community-based interventions aimed at prevention of harmful UV light exposure and is part of a broader review of interventions designed to address prevention and early detection of cancer as a component of the **Guide to Community Preventive Services**. Other strategic areas addressed by the Task Force's review include interventions designed to increase delivery of cancer screening and promote informed decision making with regard to cancer screening.

### Summary of Findings

The independent Task Force on Community Preventive Services issues the following findings for interventions within each of three strategic areas as identified through a detailed analytic framework; these are those that are setting specific, targeted at specific populations, or communitywide interventions. Recommendations are based on the strength of the evidence of effectiveness found through a systematic review of published studies conducted by a team of experts on behalf of the Task Force. Recommendation outcomes focused on changes in the following outcomes: 1) improving "covering up" behavior [i.e. wearing protective clothing such as a shirt, long pants, and hat], or 2) increase in shade use or staying out of the sun during peak UV hours]. Sunscreen use was considered a secondary outcome meaning that a change in sunscreen use alone would not result in a recommendation but it should have accompanied one of the two recommendation outcomes. **A determination that there is "insufficient evidence to determine effectiveness" does not mean that the intervention does not work**, but rather indicates that additional research is needed to determine whether or not the intervention is effective. Decision makers should consider these evidence-based recommendations in light of local needs, goals, and constraints when choosing interventions to implement.

Intervention	Recommendation
<b>Setting Specific Interventions</b>	
Educational/policy interventions in primary schools	Recommended (Sufficient Evidence) <i>(to improve children's sun-protective "covering up" behavior)</i>
Educational/policy interventions in recreational/tourism settings	Recommended (Sufficient Evidence) <i>(to improve adult sun-protective "covering up" behavior)</i>
Educational/policy interventions in recreational/tourism settings	Insufficient Evidence to determine effectiveness <i>(to improve children's sun-protective behaviors)</i>
Educational/policy interventions in child care centers	Insufficient Evidence to determine effectiveness
Educational/policy interventions in secondary schools/ colleges	Insufficient Evidence to determine effectiveness
Interventions oriented to health care settings and providers	Insufficient Evidence to determine effectiveness
Educational/policy approaches in occupational settings	Insufficient Evidence to determine effectiveness
<b>Target Population Specific Interventions</b>	
Interventions oriented to children's parents or caregivers	Insufficient evidence to determine effectiveness
<b>Community wide Interventions</b>	
Mass Media and small media without other activities	Insufficient evidence to determine effectiveness
Community-wide multi-component interventions	Insufficient evidence to determine effectiveness

### Publications:

- **MMWR/Recommendations and Reports** – Fall 2003 - A report on findings.

The **Guide to Community Preventive Services** (Community Guide) provides recommendations on population-based interventions to promote health and to prevent disease, injury, disability, and premature death, appropriate for use by communities and healthcare systems. For more information about the Community Guide (including links to publications and a variety of resources) see

[www.thecommunityguide.org](http://www.thecommunityguide.org) and for more information about the Cancer review see [www.thecommunityguide.org/cancer/](http://www.thecommunityguide.org/cancer/)