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For Immediate Release

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Save Your Skin!

As you enjoy time outside this Memorial Day weekend with family and friends, don't forget to protect your skin. As a reminder, the National Council on Skin Cancer Prevention has designated Friday, May 25th as "Don't Fry Day" to help encourage sun safety awareness.

Skin cancer is on the rise in the United States. The American Cancer Society estimates that one American dies every hour from skin cancer. In 2012 alone, the American Cancer Society estimates that there will be more than 76,250 new cases of malignant melanoma, the most serious form of skin cancer. Harmful rays from the sun—and sunlamps and tanning beds—may also cause eye problems, weaken your immune system, and give you skin spots, wrinkles, or "leathery" skin.

Sun damage to the body is caused by invisible ultraviolet (UV) radiation. Individuals with lighter-toned skin and those who have blond, red, or light brown hair are more susceptible to UV damage, although people of all races and ethnicities can be at risk for skin cancer. Those who have a family history of skin cancer, plenty of moles or freckles, or a history of severe sunburns early in life are at a higher risk for skin cancer as well. To minimize the harmful effects of excessive and unprotected sun exposure, protection from intense UV radiation should be a life-long practice for everyone. Because no single step can fully protect you and your family from overexposure to UV radiation, follow as many of the following tips as possible when spending time outdoors.

***Reduce time in the sun.** It is important to limit sun exposure between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m., when the sun's rays are the strongest. Even on an overcast day, up to 80 percent of the sun's UV rays can get through the clouds. Stay in the shade as much as possible throughout the day.

***Dress with care.** Wear clothes that protect your body. If you plan on being outside on a sunny day, cover as much of your body as possible. Wear a wide-brimmed hat and consider using an umbrella for shade.

***Be serious about sunscreen.** Check product labels to make sure you get a "sun protection factor" (SPF) of 15 or more and "broad spectrum" protection. SPF represents the degree to which a sunscreen can protect the skin from sunburn and broad spectrum protects against all types of skin damage caused by sunlight. Also, use a water resistance sunscreen, which will stay on your skin longer, even if it gets wet. When putting on sunscreen, apply the recommended amount evenly to all uncovered skin, especially your lips, nose, ears, neck, hands, and feet. Remember to apply sunscreen 15 minutes before going out in the sun and reapply at least every two hours.

***Protect the eyes.** Sunlight reflecting off snow, sand, or water further increases exposure to UV radiation and increase your risk of developing eye problems. When buying sunglasses, look for a label that specifically offers 99 to 100 percent UV protection. Eyewear should be labeled "sunglasses." Otherwise, you cannot be sure they will offer enough protection. Wraparound sunglasses offer the most protection. Individuals who wear contact lenses that offer UV protection should still wear sunglasses.

As you enjoy outdoor activities this weekend and throughout the summer, do not forget to protect your skin. As "Don't Fry Day" reminds us this Friday, remember to Slip! Slop! Slap...and Wrap when you are outdoors—slip on a shirt, slop on sunscreen of SPF 15 or higher, slap on a wide-brimmed hat, and wrap on sunglasses.

For additional information on protecting your skin and sun safety awareness, visit www.skincancerprevention.org. You can also contact the Flint Hills Extension District office in Cottonwood Falls at (620) 273-6491 or the office in Council Grove at (620) 767-5136.

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