Sunscreen Controversy - Dr. Laura

By using sunscreen we think that we are protecting ourselves from skin cancer, yet we may actually be increasing our risk of developing skin cancer.

Particular sunscreen ingredients (such as oxybenzone, benzophenone, octocrylene, octyl methoxycinnamate, PABA or para-aminobenzoic acid, micronized titanium or zinc oxide (nanoparticles) may actually be linked to increased risk of malignant melanoma.

The use of sunscreen has also been linked to vitamin D deficiency, which predisposed you to developing cancer.

More than 95% of vitamin D production in the skin is inhibited with the use of sunscreen that has an SPF of 8. It has been shown that skin cancers are found more often in people who use sunscreen compared to those who don’t use sunscreen.

The best way to get vitamin D is from modest sun exposure. Going outside regularly will greatly help to generate vitamin D. The face and hands must be able to absorb sunlight for 30 min per day without sunscreen. If you live at a latitude above 35 degrees latitude north or below 35 degrees latitude south it may not be possible to generate enough vitamin D from sun exposure. To know that you are getting adequate amounts of vitamin D your shadow should not be taller than your height.

However, there is a concern of overexposure to the sun. Allowing your skin to burn may lead to an increased risk of skin cancer. Wearing a light weight shirt and hat that cover you when you are out in the sun for long periods of time is a great alternative to wearing sunscreen. There are sunscreen products available with less carcinogenic ingredients.

please read the labels carefully!

We like to refer patients to the environmental working group’s sunscreen guide for further information on the safest sunscreens:

http://breakingnews.ewg.org/2012sunscreen/all-sunscreens/