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## TIPS FOR AVOIDING SUMMER SUNBURNS

BUTTE COUNTY, Calif. — Summer time means more time spent outside swimming, camping, gardening, exercising, and barbecuing. Adults need to protect themselves from excessive sun exposure and they need to be especially vigilant to protect children from sunburn.

The American Cancer Society estimated that in 2009 there were 68,720 new cases of melanoma (a dangerous type of skin cancer) in the United States and about 8,650 people were expected to die of this disease. Skin cancer is the most common of all cancers. Melanoma accounts for less than 5% of skin cancer cases, but it causes most skin cancer deaths.

According to Aimee Myles, Health Education Specialist for Butte County Public Health Department, "It is important to follow these steps to prevent sunburns that can do lasting damage to the skin."

- Encourage children to play in the shade between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. when the sun's rays are the strongest. Adults should also limit their time in the sun during these hours, and apply sunscreen liberally if out in the sun during this time.
- Apply sunscreen with a Sun Protection Factor (SPF) of 30 or higher everyday. Reapply after swimming and sweating.
- Do not use sunscreen on babies less than 6 months old. Their skin is thin and their systems can absorb chemicals causing toxicity. They should be kept out of the sun entirely.
- Cover up with hats and clothing.
- Wear sunglasses that block 99%-100% of UVA and UVB rays.
- Remember: Slip!, Slop!, Slap! ® **Slip! on a shirt.** Wear protective clothing when out in the sun. **Slop! on sunscreen** with an SPF of 30 or higher even on cloudy days. **Slap! on a hat** that shades the face, neck, and ears. (Recommended by the American Cancer Society)
- Check with a doctor before sun exposure if you are taking any prescription drugs. Some medications interact with the sun to produce rashes or other side effects.

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- Beware of reflected sunlight; Ultraviolet (UV) rays reflect off water, sand, and snow. UV rays also reach below water's surface.

It is recommended that people do a skin self-examination which consists of regularly looking over the entire body, including the back, scalp, soles of feet, between toes and on the palms of the hands. If there are any changes in the size, color, shape or texture of a mole, the development of a new mole, or any other unusual changes in the skin, you should see a dermatologist (a doctor specializing in skin) immediately. When caught early, skin cancer is very treatable.

For more information about skin cancer and sun protection contact a local dermatologist or the American Cancer Society at 1-800-ACS-2345.

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### **Butte County Public Health Department**

Our Mission: To protect the public through promoting individual,  
community and environmental health.