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Skin Cancer Awareness Campaign Hits the Slopes

Pocatello, ID (March 6, 2009) — Cancer of the skin (including melanoma and non-melanoma skin cancer) is the most common of all cancers. It accounts for about half of all cancers.

Portneuf Cancer Center and Pebble Creek Ski Area have teamed up to increase public awareness about skin cancer. Throughout the month of March, Portneuf Cancer Center will provide free sun screen to skiers, boarders and visitors alike. Baskets of sun screen are positioned throughout the Pebble Creek Ski Area lodge and office.

While all skin cancers can't be prevented by wearing sunscreen, harmful UV rays are a major contributing factor. Cancer Survivor and General Manager of Pebble Creek, Mary Reichman is passionate about cancer prevention. Sunny spring skiing means intense sun exposure and the risk of severe, skin damaging sun burns. Awareness and prevention are first steps in reducing skin cancer.

According to the American Cancer Society, here are essential year-around ways to reduce your risk of skin cancer:

Limit ultraviolet (UV) exposure: The best way to lower the risk of non-melanoma skin cancer is to limit your exposure to strong sunlight. Be "sun safe" when you are outdoors. "Slip! Slop! Slap! ... and Wrap" is a catch phrase to remind you of the 4 ways you can protect yourself and those you love from UV radiation: slip on a shirt, slop on sunscreen, slap on a hat, and wrap on sunglasses to protect the eyes and sensitive skin around them from UV light.

Protect your skin with clothing: Some clothes give more protection than others. Long-sleeved shirts, long pants, or long skirts are the best. Dark colors are better than light colors. A tightly woven fabric protects better than loosely woven clothing. Dry fabric is most often better than wet fabric.

Some clothing is made with built-in UV protection. There are also newer products that can increase the ultraviolet protection factor (UPF) value of clothes you already own. Used like laundry detergents, they add a layer of UV protection to your clothes without changing the color or how the cloth feels.

Wear a hat: A hat with at least a 2- to 3-inch brim all around is best because it protects areas often exposed to the sun, such as the neck, ears, eyes, forehead, nose, and scalp. A shade cap (which looks like a baseball cap with about 7 inches of fabric draping down the sides and back) also is good. These are often sold in sports and outdoor supply stores.

Use sunscreen: Use sunscreen and lip balm with an SPF of 15 or higher. Be sure to use enough (a palmful) and put it on again every 2 hours. Use sunscreen even on hazy or overcast days. For it to work best, sunscreen should be put on about 20 to 30 minutes before you go outside.

Don't make the mistake of thinking that because you're using sunscreen, you can stay out in the sun longer. Sunscreen should not be used to gain extra time in the sun, because you will still end up with damage to your skin. You won't reduce your risk that way. If you want a tan, try using a sunless tanning lotion. These can make you look tan without the danger. You do not have to go out in the sun for these to work. The color tends to wear off after a few days.

Wear sunglasses: Wrap-around sunglasses that absorb at least 99% of the UV rays help protect your eyes and the skin around your eyes.

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