

NEWS RELEASE

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For immediate release

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Skin cancer is the most common type of cancer in the United States with more than a million new cases diagnosed each year. However, 90% of all skin cancers can be prevented by protection from the sun's rays or ultraviolet radiation. Eighty percent of total lifetime sun exposure is received during childhood and kids receive three times as much ultraviolet radiation as adults do in a year.

Pool Cool, a program implemented at 19 pools across the Panhandle, encourages positive sun safety among children, their families and staff at swimming pools. Janelle Hansen is a health educator at Panhandle Public Health District. "Pool Cool has been shown to improve children's sun safety habits and sunscreen use, while also improving sun protection policies at swimming pools," she said.

The sun protection basics include using sunscreen, wearing protective clothing, minimizing exposure and seeking shade whenever possible. Pool Cool includes sunscreen provided at pools, sun protection lessons, sun safety signs, sunscreen tip posters, and poolside activities.

This year's Pool Cool program includes a new caution around tanning beds. "The odds for deadly skin cancer rise more than fourfold with some devices," Hansen said. "People who use tanning beds to keep that year-round glow are dramatically increasing their risk for developing melanoma, the deadliest of skin cancers. In fact, the more you tan and the longer you tan, the more the risk increases."

Hansen cited the case of sisters from Shelby, Nebr., Deana and Lindsey 8.

"In high school, I never thought my love for the look of the California beach queen would ever have an effect on me," Lindsey tells. "Oh boy, was I wrong! My junior year, I got a job as a lifeguard. I rarely wore sunscreen. For homecoming and prom, I was in the tanning beds at least once a week."

"Three years ago, when I was 19, I had five moles removed from my back and neck. One mole on my back came back positive for skin cancer. Fortunately, it was caught early so I didn't need chemotherapy or radiation treatment. However, I continue to have regular checkups and have had many more suspicious moles removed. I have stayed out of tanning beds and apply sunscreen every day – even on cloudy days!"

"I don't lie out and tan any more. Once you have had pieces of your body cut away because of sun damage, you don't find it appealing to sunbathe anymore," Lindsey continued.

"If I knew then what I know now, I would have never tanned. If you have to, use the spray-on tans. Protect yourself, learn to love your skin; be confident and comfortable the way you look without the fake bake!"

For additional information about sun safety, visit www.pphd.org. The purpose of the Panhandle Public Health District is to educate the region it serves about the prevention of epidemics, spread of contagious diseases, injury, illness and disability. The district is charged with promoting and encouraging healthy behaviors. They promote the quality and accessibility of health services and protection against environmental hazards. Through education, protection and promotion of these issues, the Panhandle Public Health District believes the quality of life of the residents they serve can be greatly improved.