



Sun Safety Tips For Sports Enthusiasts

ELIZABETH MICHAELSON

How do you play it safe in the sun? The Skin Cancer Foundation asked several athletes who are uniquely qualified to advise readers — they're also dermatologists!

As skin experts, all of them take certain general precautions and recommend you do the same: Avoid outdoor athletics between the peak sun hours of 10 AM and

“Put sunscreen on your ears. People always forget that!”

Steven M. Rotter, MD

4 PM; wear protective clothing, hats, and UV-blocking sunglasses, and use a broad spectrum, sweat-resistant, SPF 15+ sunscreen, being careful to cover often-missed exposed spots such as the hands and the back of the neck.

In addition, all these athletic enthusiasts face specific sun hazards for their respective sports. Here's their advice for

those who want to get the most out of the sporting life, without risking sun damage and skin cancer.

GOLF

Steven M. Rotter, MD, is an avid golfer. A particular sun hazard for golfers, he said, is added ultraviolet (UV) radiation intensity due to reflection from ponds and sand traps (which can bounce back 80 percent or more of the sun's UV rays so that they hit golfers' skin twice). On the links, Rotter uses a sport sunscreen formula that doesn't run and irritate his eyes, and reapplies it every “nine holes, or every two hours.” He also noted that, while hats are important to shield the face (one of the most common sites for nonmelanoma skin cancers), they are not a substitute for sunscreen, and not all headgear is created equal: “You need a broad-brimmed hat. Baseball hats don't protect the back of your neck or shoulders.” A hat with a 3-inch brim all around protects not just the face and top of the head, but also the neck, shoulders, and ears. Rotter was especially adamant about the latter:

“Put sunscreen on your ears. People always forget that!”

RUNNING

“It's important to realize that the sun's damaging rays are present year-round,” said Elizabeth K. Hale, MD, who has completed the New York City Marathon — twice. Up to about 80 percent of the sun's ultraviolet radiation can penetrate clouds and fog, so protection is necessary even when it's overcast, she noted.

For Hale, “Protective clothing and hats are the most important first step, since with heavy perspiration, sunscreen products can rub off and lose their effectiveness.” Hale looks for clothing with a UPF (ultraviolet protection factor) label, which indicates how much of the sun's ultraviolet radiation will be absorbed by the fabric. A shirt with a UPF of 30, for instance, allows just 1/30th of the sun's UV radiation to reach your skin. (The Skin Cancer Foundation recommends clothes with a UPF of 30 or higher.) Hale is a fan of Coolibar's line of sun-protective clothing, which offers UPFs of up to 50+.



This page, clockwise from left: PGA Pro Golfer Greg Norman; Dr. Masessa on the (NASCAR) road; The Half Moon, a full scale replica of a Dutch ship of exploration; Sailing a course to keep the Half Moon in the shade.

She also looks for breathable fabrics that help runners avoid overheating and likes Nike's DriFIT technology.

Additionally, said Hale, "It's important to pick a sunscreen that offers UVA and UVB protection. Runners should look for a sunscreen that is sweat-resistant and

Sailors face particular danger from extra UV exposure due to reflection off the water. "The crew is encouraged to apply liberal amounts of sunscreen and to repeat application during the day, since medical care is limited on the open water," said Hendricks. "We prefer the newer

necessary. We encourage the crew to wear hooded sweatshirts and rain gear." These protect against not just the rain but the sun. Finally, the crew often rigs a sail horizontally over the mid-deck to shield visitors against UV at dockside during maritime festivals.

"Non-steroidal anti-inflammatories (NSAIDs) like Ibuprofen (Advil and Motrin) and Naproxen (Aleve) make one extra sensitive to the sun."

won't sting if it gets into the eyes — I like Coppertone Sport, for example, which has been tested on athletes."

SAILING

Andrew A. Hendricks, MD's passion for history prompted him to found the non-profit New Netherland Museum, in Albany, New York, which sponsors a full-size replica of Henry Hudson's 17th century Dutch ship, de Halve Maen (Half Moon).

sunscreens that use micronized particles (for example, Vanicream). In these products (considered "physical" sunscreens because they block or reflect rather than chemically absorb UV), zinc oxide and titanium dioxide — two of the best UVA-UVB physical sunscreen ingredients — offer better sun protection."

Hendricks supplies extra sunscreen, since "sudden rain storms will wash off sunscreen, so repeat application is

TENNIS

Amy Amonette Huber, MD, has been playing tennis for years, and like Hendricks, she prefers physical sunscreens: "Zinc oxide tends to stay on better despite sweat or rubbing. I use zinc oxide (Vanicream 30 or 60 SPF) on my face and then I use one of the SPF 30 or 50 spray preparations (Coppertone Sport, for example) on other exposed areas: It's convenient and less messy to put on. It's also very important to protect the lips." Huber chooses a lip balm with an SPF of at least 30.

As many tennis players have found, a power serve may be accompanied by sore muscles. Over-the-counter pain relievers are popular remedies, but, Huber warned, "Non-steroidal anti-inflammatories (NSAIDs) like Ibuprofen (Advil and Motrin) and Naproxen (Aleve) make one



Tennis pro Feliciano Lopez with shade-providing headgear; Dr. Hale, left, with her sister (and fellow dermatologist) Julie K. Karen, MD.

extra sensitive to the sun." If you use such medications for your aches and pains, be extra vigilant about protecting your skin, so that it doesn't take a pummeling along with your muscles.

AUTO RACING

NASCAR (The National Association for Stock Car Auto Racing) is the fastest growing sport in the US; it also offers unique sun safety challenges for both participants and spectators. Joe Masessa, MD, drives a red Chevrolet (featuring The Skin Cancer Foundation's logo) in NASCAR's Camping World East Series.

NASCAR races are held outdoors, in fine weather, and most take place from April to October, when the sun's UVB rays are strongest. The days are long; some start at 7 AM and end at 8 PM. This all adds up to a dangerous amount of UV exposure for participants — and for NASCAR fans, many of whom sit, unprotected, in the sun for days at a time.

"The crews are outdoors from the minute we get to the track to the time we leave," Masessa explained. Even drivers are mainly outside, in the cars for no more than half an

hour at a time, he adds. While drivers wear suits and helmets, "I've seen a number of skin cancers on the face and neck, and on the arms," Masessa said. It's also important to note that UVA rays, especially, can pass through car window glass and injure your skin; The Skin Cancer Foundation advises people who drive a lot to add UV-protective window film to their side and rear windows. (The windshield is already equipped with it.)

Since Masessa joined the circuit he's helped raise skin cancer awareness among NASCAR *aficionados*: "I always bring sunscreen and hats. Other drivers and crew members would come to me to get sunscreen — nobody else *ever* brought sunscreen to the track."

He even offers curbside — or trackside — consulting, and his impromptu skin screenings have encouraged many crew members and drivers to take care of precancerous and cancerous lesions. "If I say, 'Go get that cut off,' they do. I've found the athletes to be very compliant!" He added, "I draw the line at surgery at the track, though I've been asked." ■

DR. ROTTER is the owner and director of the Center for Skin Surgery & Skin Cancer Outpatient Surgical Hospital, Vienna, Virginia.



DR. HALE is a clinical associate professor of dermatology at the New York University Langone Medical Center, where she received the Surgical Attending Physician of the Year Award for 2008. She practices at The Laser & Skin Surgery Center of New York.



DR. HENDRICKS is board-certified in both dermatology and cosmetic surgery and is the director of the Southeastern Dermatology Cosmetic Surgery Center, Lumberton, NC. He is the founder of the Albany, New York-based New Netherland Museum, which built the 17th century replica ship, *Half Moon*.

DR. HUBER practices general dermatology and Mohs surgery at the Memphis Dermatology Clinic.



DR. MASESSA is a board-certified dermatologist who practices in Rockaway, NJ, when he's not racing.

