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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PROTECT YOUR SKIN DURING THE HOT SUMMER MONTHS

Summer is upon us and many of us will be spending more time in the sun. Be sure to take precautions and protect your skin against the sun's harmful UV rays which are the strongest between the hours of 10:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. Remember to apply sunscreen and lip balm with an SPF of at least 20 or higher, one half hour before going outside to protect you from sunburn, a risk factor in developing skin cancer.

Be careful around reflective surfaces such as water, cement, and sand, and re-apply sunscreen at least every two hours and after swimming. Slip on protective clothing to protect exposed skin. Don't be fooled by a cloudy day. The sun's rays can pass through the haze and thin clouds. Remember to protect your eyes by wearing a hat or sunglasses.. Excessive exposure to ultraviolet light reflected off sand and pavement can damage the cornea. Ophthalmologists recommend that you wear 99-100% UV-absorbent sunglasses whenever you are in the sun long enough to get a suntan.

Protect children from sun exposure by playing in the shade. Babies under one year of age should stay out of the sun and in the shade. Be sure to dress your baby in protective clothing and always cover a baby's head with a hat. Use an umbrella over their stroller. Child-sized sunglasses with UV protection are also a good way to protect your child's eyes. Sunburns can be very dangerous to a small child, so do everything you can to prevent this. If your baby is younger than one year old and is sunburned, contact your pediatrician immediately; this is an emergency situation. For older babies, contact your doctor if there is blistering, pain, or fever.

First degree sunburns cause redness and some peeling. They are best treated with cool baths and over-the-counter hydrocortisone creams. Second degree sunburns blister and can be considered a medical emergency. Do not break the blisters, as they are a natural protective mechanism to heal the affected area, and be careful to protect your skin from the sun while it heals.

It is never too late to protect your skin. Most of the more than 1 million cases of non-melanoma skin cancer diagnosed yearly in the United States are considered to be sun-related. Plan to give yourself a skin exam once a month, in addition to your annual check-up with a doctor who can inspect your skin and answer any questions you may have. Check the American Academy of Dermatology's Website, www.aad.org, for the latest list of sun-protective products that meet the AAD Seal of Recognition.

If you have any topics that you would like to see discussed in this column please call Maryanne at (603) 747-9189 or email maldrich@cottagehospital.org

Cottage Hospital is a 25-bed, Critical Access Hospital, serving the beautiful Upper Connecticut River Valley. For additional information regarding Cottage Hospital and any of our services visit us on the web at www.cottagehospital.org or call (603)747-9000.

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