DERMATOLOGISTS SAY SUNSCREEN IS A VITAL TOOL IN THE FIGHT AGAINST SKIN CANCER, THE MOST COMMON CANCER IN THE U.S.

During Skin Cancer Awareness Month, the American Academy of Dermatology is asking the public “Do you use protection?” and encouraging consumers to “practice safe sun” — which includes applying sunscreen.

Rosemont, Ill. (May 7, 2019) – Recent news about sunscreen has many consumers confused about the best approach for sun protection, and some have questioned whether they should be using sunscreen at all. To help clear up the confusion, dermatologists from the American Academy of Dermatology are reminding consumers that sunscreen—along with seeking shade and wearing protective clothing—plays a key role in protecting the skin from the sun’s harmful ultraviolet rays, which can increase the risk of skin cancer. Throughout Skin Cancer Awareness Month, the AAD is offering tips to help the public “practice safe sun,” including how to select a sunscreen and other ways to prevent skin cancer.

“Research suggests that daily use of sunscreen could decrease the incidence of melanoma, the deadliest form of skin cancer,” says board-certified dermatologist Henry W. Lim, MD, FAAD, chair emeritus of the department of dermatology at Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit. “However, it’s important to use sunscreen in conjunction with seeking shade and wearing protective clothing—including a wide-brimmed hat and sunglasses—to protect you from sunburn, skin cancer and early skin aging, such as wrinkles and age spots.”

For the best protection, the AAD recommends looking for sunscreens with the following terms on the label:

- **Broad-spectrum**: This means that the sunscreen helps protect from ultraviolet A (UVA) and ultraviolet B (UVB) rays, both of which can cause skin cancer.
- **SPF 30 or Higher**: This indicates how well a sunscreen protects you from sunburn. Dermatologists recommend using a sunscreen with an SPF of at least 30, which blocks 97% of the sun’s UVB rays (the burning rays). Higher-number SPFs block slightly more, however no sunscreen can block 100% of the sun’s UV rays.
- **Water Resistant**: Sunscreens can be water resistant for 40 minutes or 80 minutes. However, they are not waterproof or sweatproof and need to be reapplied every two hours when outdoors, or after swimming or sweating.

“Alarmingly, a new AAD survey showed that when considering a sunscreen, less than half of Americans look for a product with broad-spectrum protection,” says Dr. Lim. “Considering that unprotected exposure to the sun’s UV rays is a major risk factor for skin cancer, it’s important to make an informed decision when selecting a sunscreen for you and your family.”

Another tip for selecting a sunscreen, says Dr. Lim, is to familiarize yourself with the two types of sunscreens available—chemical and physical. Both protect you from the sun, he says, but in different ways:

- **Chemical sunscreens** work like a sponge, absorbing the sun’s rays. They contain one or more of the following active ingredients: avobenzone, ensulizole, homosalate, octinoxate, octisalate, octocrylene or oxybenzone.
Physical sunscreens, also known as mineral sunscreens, act like a shield. They sit on the surface of the skin, primarily deflecting the sun’s rays. They include the active ingredients titanium dioxide and/or zinc oxide, and are recommended for people with sensitive skin.

“Remember, sunscreen is one component of a comprehensive sun protection plan that includes seeking shade and wearing protective clothing, including a lightweight, long-sleeved shirt, pants, a wide-brimmed hat and sunglasses,” says Dr. Lim. “If you have questions or concerns about sunscreen or other ways to protect your skin and prevent skin cancer, talk to a board-certified dermatologist.”

Skin cancer is the most common type of cancer, and nearly one in five Americans will develop skin cancer in their lifetime. To help change this behavior and reduce the risk of skin cancer, the AAD’s 2019 SPOT Skin Cancer™ campaign is asking Americans “Do you use protection?” and encouraging the public to “practice safe sun” — no matter your age, gender or race. To learn more about skin cancer prevention and detection and to find a free skin cancer screening near you, visit DoYouUseProtection.org.

Additionally, the public can help raise awareness of skin cancer by using the hashtag #PracticeSafeSun when sharing AAD resources, photos of how they “use protection” outdoors, or encouraging friends and family to take advantage of the AAD’s free skin cancer screenings. Individuals who have been affected by skin cancer can also share their personal stories on SpotSkinCancer.org to provide support and inspiration for others fighting skin cancer and communicate the importance of skin cancer prevention and early detection.

# # #

Contacts
Nicole Dobkin, (847) 240-1746, ndobkin@aad.org

More Information
“Do You Use Protection?” video
“Do You Use Protection?” infographic
Skin cancer fact sheet
Indoor tanning fact sheet
SpotSkinCancer.org
Sunscreen Resource Center

About the AAD
Headquartered in Rosemont, Ill., the American Academy of Dermatology, founded in 1938, is the largest, most influential, and most representative of all dermatologic associations. With a membership of more than 20,000 physicians worldwide, the AAD is committed to: advancing the diagnosis and medical, surgical and cosmetic treatment of the skin, hair and nails; advocating high standards in clinical practice, education, and research in dermatology; and supporting and enhancing patient care for a lifetime of healthier skin, hair and nails. For more information, contact the AAD at (888) 462-DERM (3376) or aad.org. Follow the AAD on Facebook (American Academy of Dermatology), Twitter (@AADskin), Instagram (@AADskin1), or YouTube (AcademyofDermatology).

About SPOT Skin Cancer™
For more information on skin cancer prevention and detection, visit the AAD website SpotSkinCancer.org. There, you can find instructions on how to perform a skin self-exam, download a body mole map for tracking changes in your skin
and find free SPOTme® skin cancer screenings in your area. SPOT Skin Cancer™ is the AAD’s campaign to create a world without skin cancer through public awareness, community outreach programs and services, and advocacy that promote the prevention, detection and care of skin cancer.