



it works for me

Finding answers to parenting's toughest questions.

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“I don’t like the looks of this one at all,” said my dermatologist, looking through the lens of her scope at a mole on my upper lip. “It’s dark, it’s irregular, I need to biopsy this.” I got this unwelcome news last week at a head to toe skin check, my first in almost two years, too long for this fair-skinned, freckled mom. Was she trying to scare me or was she really concerned? I had a week to ponder that one while I waited for a phone call with the biopsy results. (More on that later...)

So it may seem rather odd that three days later both of my kids would come off of their respective lacrosse fields with sunburns. Hadn’t I learned? I’ve read the statistics.... Bad sunburns early in life increase the risk of developing skin cancer later in life. I’d had my share of those bad sunburns: From peeling layer after layer of skin from my nose and shoulders all summer long as a kid, to teen and post college summer weekends lounging at the beach with good friends and very little sunscreen.



We’re good about applying and re-applying in the summer when the sun is strong but all year round the sun can still do it’s damage and when it comes to our own/my own kids, the buck stops with parents. **Paramus dermatologist Rebecca Baxt, M.D., reminded me that it’s important not to wait for a July day at the beach or pool to think about sunscreen. “People often get their worst burns when they least expect it – cloudy hazy days or cold but sunny days.” And in our case, mid-April when we were caught off guard and hit with 65 plus degree weather and strong sun shine.**

Make it a routine for your kids, says Dr. Baxt. “Put sunscreen on every day before school, sporting events and on weekends. As they get older allow some time and let them apply it themselves, paying attention and pointing out

missed spots.” And when summer is over and fall rolls in the sunscreen needs to stay on the counter, in the car and in my bag. The sun is still out and can do it’s damage.. in April, July and October.

Bottom line: Here are the facts (from the Skin Cancer Foundation):

A person’s risk for melanoma doubles if he or she has had more than 5 sunburns at any age.

One in five Americans will develop skin cancer in the course of a lifetime.

Melanoma is the most common form of cancer for young adults 25-29 years old and the second most common form of cancer for young people 15-29 years old.

My goal:

For the rest of my days I’ll go into the dermatologist’s office once a year wondering and worrying ‘Is this the day that my childhood summers of sunburns will catch up to me?’ When it comes to the kids, we’ll slip sometimes and forget... they’ll get occasional sunburns but that’s no excuse to not try harder. Twenty-five years from now I want them to not have those same fears, to see a visit to the dermatologist the same as a visit to the dentist, a necessary inconvenience.

The biopsy results? A call from the nurse came with good news: “It’s just a sun freckle,” she told me. This time.