

Skin Care Isn't Seasonal: Sun-Safety Tips to Practice This Winter

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Photo courtesy of Raw Pixel on Unsplash.

As the Valley welcomes cooler temperatures, it's only normal that we would want to head outside and bask in the glorious winter sun. And with the holiday season quickly approaching, outdoor festivities and events serve as the perfect excuse to step outside of your home and spend quality time with the ones you love.

While it's wonderful to embark on a brisk, morning hike or enjoy patio seating at an evening happy hour, it's no excuse to neglect your health – and, more specifically, your skin care. The winter sun and crisp weather are seemingly deceiving. Although they may be a refreshing change of pace from some of the sweltering heat that we endure during the summer months, they are just as dangerous for our skin.

This year, an estimated 10,130 people will die of melanoma, which is noted as being the deadliest form of skin cancer. That equates to one person dying every hour. While applying sun screen daily and maintaining a consistent skin care regimen may be strides in the right direction of preserving your skin's health, there are other small changes that you can make within your life, that will leave a long-lasting impact.



Photo of Dr. Samuel Figueroa.

Samuel Figueroa, M.D., who is an internal medicine doctor at Golden Apple Medicine and is on the medical staff at St. Luke's Medical Center, specializes in the treatment of sun-damaged skin. Dr. Figueroa spoke with AZFootHills.com and advised how imperative it is to not put our guards down to sun safety throughout the winter months.

"Living in Arizona, it's easy to let your guard down once we're out of the scorching summer weather. We equate the summer sun's intensity and heat with skin damage, but it's really the ultraviolet rays that are doing harm," says Dr. Figueroa. "Temperature has nothing to do with harmful UV rays that damage skin – just ask anyone who has gotten a serious sunburn while skiing or snowboarding. The truth is that although the weather may be cooler or we may see more clouds in the sky, harmful ultraviolet rays are still getting through and wreaking havoc on our skin."

Dr. Figueroa also offered some additional sun-safety tips to hold onto as we head into the holiday season:

- **Sunscreen.** It's the first line of defense against the sun's most dangerous rays.
- **Cover up.** Wear protective clothing, including longer sleeves and pants, to shield your skin.
- **Protect your eyes.** Invest in quality sunglasses that offer UV protection. Just like your skin, your eyes are exposed to those harmful rays.
- **Say "no" to tanning beds.** It's tempting to want to maintain that summer glow as you're heading out to holiday parties, but tanning beds expose you to intense UV radiation, which increases your risk of skin cancer.

It's also important to note that everyone's skin is unique and will require more or less attention based off of a person's age, lifestyle, complexion and skin-care history.

"It's never too late to get started and it shouldn't be a burden to start a healthy skin care regimen," said Dr. Figueroa.

For more information on personal skin care and health, be sure to consult with a dermatologist.