HEALTH TIP: PREVENT SUNBURN
By Dr. Dennis Lipton

People usually think of sunburn happening on a long summer day at the beach. But did you realize you’re at risk for a sunburn even on a cold day in the shade? Noontime, ultraviolet light energy in Vail is 60% higher than it is in New York. This intensity of UV-B radiation exposure suggests that a person of average complexion with unprotected skin would burn after only six minutes of sun exposure on a clear day at noon in Vail at 11,000 feet above sea level. The same person would develop sunburn after 25 minutes of noontime exposure in New York or 14 minutes of unprotected noontime exposure in Orlando.

Spectators watching the ski races should protect their skin, even on a cloudy day. Risk for sunburn is magnified here in the mountains since there is less atmosphere to filter the sun’s rays. In addition, the snow cover reflects and scatters the sun’s rays, which means sitting in the shade is not really protecting your skin. Guarding your skin from the damaging rays of the sun is a multifaceted effort. Keep the following in mind:

- Wear at least SPF 15 and reapply every two hours, especially on more exposed parts of your body (hands, face, ears, neck).
- Don’t count on a hat to protect you. Even a broad-rimmed hat typically only has SPF protection of 5.
- Wear UV-protective sunglasses or goggles.
- Forty-percent of the sun’s rays reach the earth even on a cloudy day, so you still need protection even if it’s cloudy or snowing.
- Look for “broad-spectrum” protection. Fortunately, the labeling on sunscreens has become more accurate and reliable due to FDA regulations.
- Many common medications make your skin more susceptible to sunburn, so you may need extra protection!

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