



EDUCADORA  
EN SALUD

HOSPITAL ONCOLÓGICO  
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## From the desk of the Public Health Educator

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### How to apply sunscreen

Reference: American  
Academy of Dermatology  
Association, 2024

- Choose a sunscreen that has an SPF of 30 or higher, is water resistant and provides UVA and UVB rays coverage.
- Apply sunscreen before going outdoors.
- Use enough sunscreen. Most adults need 1 ounce or enough to fill a shot glass to fully cover their body.
- Apply sunscreen to all skin not covered by clothing. Remember your neck, face, ears, tops of your feet, and legs.
- Protect your lips with lip balm with SPF of at least 30.
- Reapply sunscreen every 2 hours.

Humacao, Puerto Rico  
Image from park-  
royalhotels.com



## Playing at Skin Cancer Prevention

This is not a typical article. This is a recap of genuine appreciation of the dynamic that may take place when interacting with members of the community in health fairs.

Several years ago, I offered education about the prevention of skin cancer in Humacao, which is a coastal municipality of Puerto Rico. As an Island located in the Caribbean, Puerto Rico has a tropical weather with sun and calid temperatures all year around.

People go to the beach as an usual activity. Equally, they get exposed to sunlight while doing housework, gardening and car wash activities.

After arriving to Humacao, I noticed that a big amount of participants were suntanned. I refer to children, youngsters as well as adults. As the Puerto Rican community represents mixed racial characteristics with African, Indian and Spaniard traits, most of the health fair participants weren't black showing instead hybrid Hispanics characteristics. So the beautiful suntan color they have was definitely related to sun exposure. Then I concluded that my decision to work on the awareness of the damages of excessive sun exposure over the skin hit the target. But, how to get to almost 140 people who visited

my educational booth in groups of five or six while there were other attractive educational areas and free of charge health services available for routine medical check-ups?

Well, I decided to be creative. I became prepared with written fact sheets about the benefits of using suntan lotion and about the steps to prevent skin cancer and achieve its early detection. I also brought 100% cotton long-sleeves T-shirts with attractive colors and free of charge suntan lotions for participants. So I was ready for action.

At first, I noticed that most people came to my booth just looking for souvenirs. So I decided to establish one rule. Each person could get a present not after asking a question about skin cancer prevention. Participants enjoyed the challenge so my strategy seemed to work.

I started to counsel participants on a one on one basis which was fine. But participants had to wait in line for their turn and it resulted in a great effort to my voice because I was competing with loud music and all other kind of noises. Then, I decided to cluster participants in groups of six. I explained the consequences of continuous unprotected sun exposure and then, I reviewed with them the right way to wear suntan lotion.

**While doing this, I started a competition like the reality program *The Family Feud Show*. Each person had to describe one specific aspect related to wearing suntan lotion and protective clothes.**

It was curious how often they forgot to wear suntan over their ears, neck and head when the person was bald. We

laughed and awe! We were learning!

The health fair was held from 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. There was plenty of time to work in the dynamic. Participants were happy because they do not have to wait much and they were willingly focused on playfully learning the information.

After some time, the word spread out. People came to the booth sent by other people. They told me that someone invited them to pass by because they considered the information provided very valuable. Oh my God! That was a great achievement. Community members were showing honest concern and came voluntarily looking for education. I was excited and pleased. Creating awareness, a mission in progress!

