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**Title**

*Skin Cancer Prevention: Knowledge and Perceptions of a Nationwide Sample of Youth*

**Priority 1 (Research Category)**

Child and adolescent health

**Presenters**

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**Abstract**

Context: Skin cancer is the most common type of cancer in the United States and incidence continues to rise. The leading risk factor for skin cancer is sun exposure in adolescence. Given this, sun protection in young adults is an effective way to reduce the occurrence of skin cancer. The goal of this study is to identify knowledge, behaviors, and barriers among young adults toward the use of sunscreen. Primary care physicians interact with a large number of young adults and have the ideal opportunity to counsel this population. Objective: To identify youths' knowledge and experiences with sun protection and elicit recommendations to increase protection usage. Study Design: Data was obtained using MyVoice, a national poll of youth ([www.hearmyvoicenow.org](http://www.hearmyvoicenow.org)). Five open-ended questions were sent via text message to 1,151 youth on April 9, 2021. Responses were analyzed by two independent investigators after using a modified grounded theory approach to iteratively develop codes based on salient themes. Setting: Participants are youth from the United States aged 14-24 years old who were recruited from social media to meet national benchmarks based on weighted samples of the American Community Survey. Results: Of 1,151 youth, 977 responded to at least one question (response rate= 84.9%). Respondents' mean age was 19.3 years (SD=2.4), 48.1% identified as male, and 62.2% as non-Hispanic white. Nearly all respondents stated "It is very important" or "It's important!" (62.1%, 25.5% respectively) to protect your skin from the sun. The most frequently reported reason for using sun protection was to "reduce the risk of getting skin cancer" (51.7%). Nearly all (90.1%) youth reported use of sunscreen, but 81.1% of respondents have had at least one sunburn and 28.4% have had 5 or more "Many [sunburns], and yes some have blistered". Participants commonly recommended emphasizing the consequences of sun exposure to encourage sun protection use, "Inform people about the dangers of not wearing sun protection" (41.1%). Conclusions: Youth in our nationwide sample understand both the short and long term risks of sun exposure and believe that sun protection is important. Though nearly all reported sunscreen use, youth struggle with implementation of consistent sun protective behaviors with a large number reporting numerous sunburns. These youth reported insights can inform more effective strategies to improve the use of sun protection by youth.