

Shiny Lip Balms and Glosses May Actually Attract UV Rays

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Newswise — Wear sunscreen on your face everyday? Think you're covered? Well think again.

How do you protect your lips from the sun? Most women think their balms and glosses have got them covered, but experts say they're dangerously mistaken.

Certain Lip balms and glosses can actually increase your chances of developing a skin cancer.

"Many people do use sunscreen; however they tend to forget their lips," says Christine Brown, M.D., dermatologist on the medical staff at Baylor University Medical Center at Dallas.

According to a recent study, less than one-in-four Americans wear some form of lip protection. Experts say this is concerning since the lips are not only more susceptible to aging from chronic sun damage, but are also more prone to developing serious cancers.

"When skin cancer occurs on the lower lip it has the potential to be much more aggressive and metastasize to surrounding lymph nodes," adds Dr. Brown.

What's worse—many of us unknowingly attract the sun's rays to our lips by using balms and glosses.

"What most people don't realize is they're actually increasing light penetration through the lip surface by applying something clear and shiny to them," explains Dr. Brown.

In fact, dermatologists advise that women should avoid wearing glossy lipsticks in the sun altogether unless they have a layer of sun protection on underneath.

"For people who are planning to be outdoors for more than 20 minutes at a time—they really should have a specific lip sun block with an SPF of 30 ideally," says Dr. Brown.

To protect your lips, Dr. Brown says the first thing you need to do is get a lip balm or a lip sunscreen that has an SPF of 30. You should apply it in the morning under any lipsticks or lip glosses and then reapply throughout the day just as you would a lip color. Remember, it is just as important as wearing sunscreen on your face and body.

So what are the signs you may have developed a skin cancer on your lip?

First of all, skin cancers are more likely to appear on the lower lip. If you have any changes to the color of the lip surface—if an area turns opaque or white—or if you have persistent peeling or flaking of a spot on your lip—you should have it checked by a dermatologist.

For more information about Baylor University Medical Center at Dallas, visit <http://www.BaylorHealth.com>.