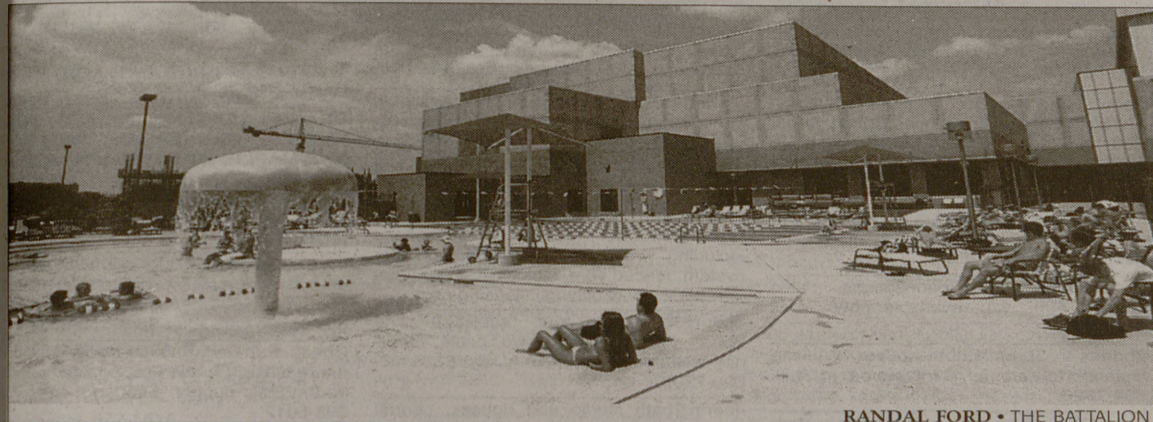


Try the shade instead Skin cancer serious problem in Texas



RANDAL FORD • THE BATTALION

A&M students bathe in the afternoon sun at the Student Recreation Center's outdoor pool area.

By Mandi Vest
THE BATTALION

Springtime in Texas means baseball, hot weather and indoor tanning. As the heat increases and laying by the pool becomes more appealing, experts suggest cooling off in the shade instead. "Young people think they cannot get skin cancer. But people can get a melanoma with as little as one sunburn," said Dr. Carol Rice of the Texas Cooperative Extension and Health Science Center and Texas A&M's School of Rural and Public Health. Rice said skin cancer is the most common type of cancer, and people in Texas should be especially careful of UV damage. Those who live in a warm, sunny climate are the most at risk for skin cancer. Texas Cooperative Extension reported one in three Texans will have skin cancer. The American Cancer Society predicts that 7,400 people will die this year from melanoma and 2,200 will die from other types of skin cancer.

But laying by the pool is not the only concern of cancer experts. Rice said it is a common misconception that tanning beds are safer than real sun.

"In people's minds, tanning beds are safer. But research has shown that laying in a tanning bed can be just as bad," Rice said.

She said that UV-A rays, the type of light used in tanning beds, has been shown to be the most penetrating type of UV light, causing damage at a deeper level.

According to the National Cancer Institute Website, over-exposure is common in indoor tanning because patrons do not get as hot as they do outside, so it is difficult to gauge how much damage has actually occurred.

Rice said she focuses on health education for rural communities. Last year, her initiative received a grant from the Texas Cancer Council to bring 30 people in from rural communities to educate them about skin cancer. Texas Cooperative

Extension has developed several educational Websites available for those interested in cancer prevention. Coolshade.tamu.edu contains information about the risks of sun exposure and facts about skin cancer.

A small amount of sun exposure is healthy, Rice said. Walking across campus everyday or being outside for about 30 minutes is a healthy amount of exposure.

Those who work outside, such as lifeguards, construction workers or farm workers, should take extra precautions. If being outside is necessary, Rice suggests wearing sunscreen that is has at least a 15 SPF, reapplying sunscreen every two hours and wearing a hat with a 3-inch brim. Rice explained that one-third of skin cancers are found on people's noses.

She said the most sun damage occurs during childhood, because children play outside and tend to get burned. People with fair skin

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