

KHOG Safety Article July 2016: "One Life, One Skin"

The answers are endless.

The question is, "How hot is it?" Johnny Carson got a lot of mileage out of that question in his monologues during his stint at the helm of The Tonight Show and the question seemed to take on a life of its own. Nowadays, a quick internet search of that same question will net you, not only a local weather forecast, but an unlimited amount of witty replies such as:

- *The birds have to use potholders to pull worms out of the ground.
- *The best parking place is determined by shade instead of distance.
- *Hot water now comes out of both taps.
- *You realize that asphalt has a liquid state.

Let's face it, the sun can cook the state of Missouri until it feels more like a state of misery. There is nothing I love more than summertime and as it fades into winter, I devolve into a cantankerous curmudgeon of a person while my Betty Blue hibernates in her bliss with her battery tender to keep her warm. God made summertime for motorcycling. He created it, blessed it and called it good. We love having the sun grace us with its extended-stay presence and in many cultures, there are massive parties toasting and celebrating the Summer Solstice. Me? I celebrate it on two wheels....but at what cost?

While we worship the sun when we are young, we pay the price for it as we age. The sun, in all its glory, gives us our summer via its radiation. That radiation gives us light, heat, sun tea, green grass, fresh vegetables in our garden, and skin cancer.

"Skin cancer", you are asking your self. "Why does he have to bring that up?" Here's why:

Per the Centers for Disease Control:

Skin cancer is the most common form of cancer in the United States. The following statistics refer to melanomas of the skin, which are caused, in part, by the sun's ultraviolet radiation.

In 2012 (the most recent year numbers are available)

*67,753 people in the United States were diagnosed with melanomas of the skin, including 39,673 men and 28,080 women.

*9,251 people in the United States died from melanomas of the skin, including 6,013 men and 3,238 women.

I've done a lot of other research on skin cancer as well. (Citing more sources than space allows):

Minimizing exposure to sources of ultraviolet radiation (the sunlight), wearing sun protective clothing (lightweight, long-sleeved shirts and trousers) can offer protection and actually keep you cooler because it allows air flow, yet the sun is not directly baking your skin.

To decrease ultraviolet light exposure, it is recommended to avoid the sun between the hours of 9 a.m. and 3 p.m. Another idea is to avoid the sun when one's shadow is shorter than one's height. In other words, a ride in the cool of the evening, especially to get ice cream, makes for an A+!

Sunscreen also appears to be effective in preventing melanoma. In the past, use of sunscreens with a sun protection factor (SPF) rating of 50 or higher on exposed areas were recommended; as older sunscreens more effectively blocked UVA with higher SPF. Currently, newer sunscreen ingredients (avobenzone, zinc oxide, and titanium dioxide) effectively block both UVA and UVB even at lower SPFs. Sunscreen also protects against squamous cell carcinoma, another type of skin cancer.

While I am no expert at cancer prevention, I am a motorcycle enthusiast who is very comfortable in my own skin. In fact, I am rather close to it (pun intended) and I like keeping it healthy and intact. I hope you feel the same way as skin cancer, when gone untreated, spreads easily into the lymph nodes. Lymph node cancer is no walk in the park. With early treatment, survivability is good. Yet, in 2012, over 9000 people died of skin cancer. Ignore it and it will kill you.

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Safe and smart motorcycle riding means being able to get home and live to ride another day. While leather protective gear is hot and uncomfortable, there are numerous other sources of protection available for keeping the sun - and the asphalt - out of your skin. Make sure you are protecting yourself and the hides of those you love by covering up and using liberal amounts of sunblock!

...and "Hey! Let's be CAREFUL out there!"

By Matt Thomason