Summer is knocking on the door.

Which for many folks means picnics and swimming and gardening and other outdoor activities. That also means sun. Lots and lots of sun. It is critically important that we think about protecting our skin’s health.

There is a statistic that it only takes one blistering sunburn during childhood or adolescence to nearly double a person’s chance of developing melanoma. So even when we’re younger, we have to be mindful of the sun’s rays, and as adults, we have to be role models and help protect those kids and babies.

Researchers say that a little sun is good for the body and mind: 20 minutes of sunshine helps in producing vitamin D, supports bone health, relieves blood pressure and promotes good mental health. But too much sun can lead to longer-term, negative health effects.

We need to protect ourselves when outside. I understand if we work in a field, or those that have outdoor jobs. Seek shade as much as you can, but if you can’t find shade, wear a white brim hat and sunglasses to protect those eyes, and wear UPF (Ultraviolet Protection Factor) protective clothing.

Sunscreens are sold with varying levels of SPF, the level that one buys – as long as it is 30 SPF or higher – is less important than routinely re-applying protection every two hours while outdoors.

The big thing to remember is that you can get as high of an SPF as you want, but remembering to re-apply that every two hours is critically important. The majority of people don’t put enough sunscreen on the first time, and then they don’t re-apply later. SPF 30 or higher is fine, but remember to re-apply every two hours.

The type of sunscreen one uses – spray, lotion or other – doesn’t matter. Cover as much skin as possible when outside. SPF clothing is one good way to do this, while remaining comfortable. Use sunscreen all year round. The sun’s reflection off snow in the winter can be equally damaging to skin. Remember vulnerable spots when applying sunscreen, touch the top of head, tips of ears and back of neck. Discard expired sunscreen and keep a fresh tube year-round.

Is gardening one of you activities in the summer?

Crops can be grown vertically, including the more traditional tomatoes, pole beans, and peas as well as vining crops such as cucumbers, melons, squash and gourds. Elevating plants off the ground increases the air flow which can help prevent disease. Bringing the height of the produce up also makes harvesting easier. For some that is a great option to have, so you don’t have to get on the ground to pick your produce. Recommendations are Edible-pod and snow peas because those crops have longer vines and are there fore more appropriate for growing vertically than English (shelling) peas.

Supporting your vertical garden with a sturdy structure is also important. Try using bamboo poles.

Start planning for canning now!

Gardeners are eager to plant their gardens! Now is the time to make sure canning equipment is ready for the food preservation season.

Get dial pressure gauges tested. The Presto® Pressure Gauge tester will test gauges made by Presto including the brands National, Presto®, Magic Seal and Maid of Honor. We will not test All American brand gauges. If the test shows more than two pounds of pressure off, it should be replaced. Make sure rubber gaskets on pressure canners are not cracked and are still pliable.