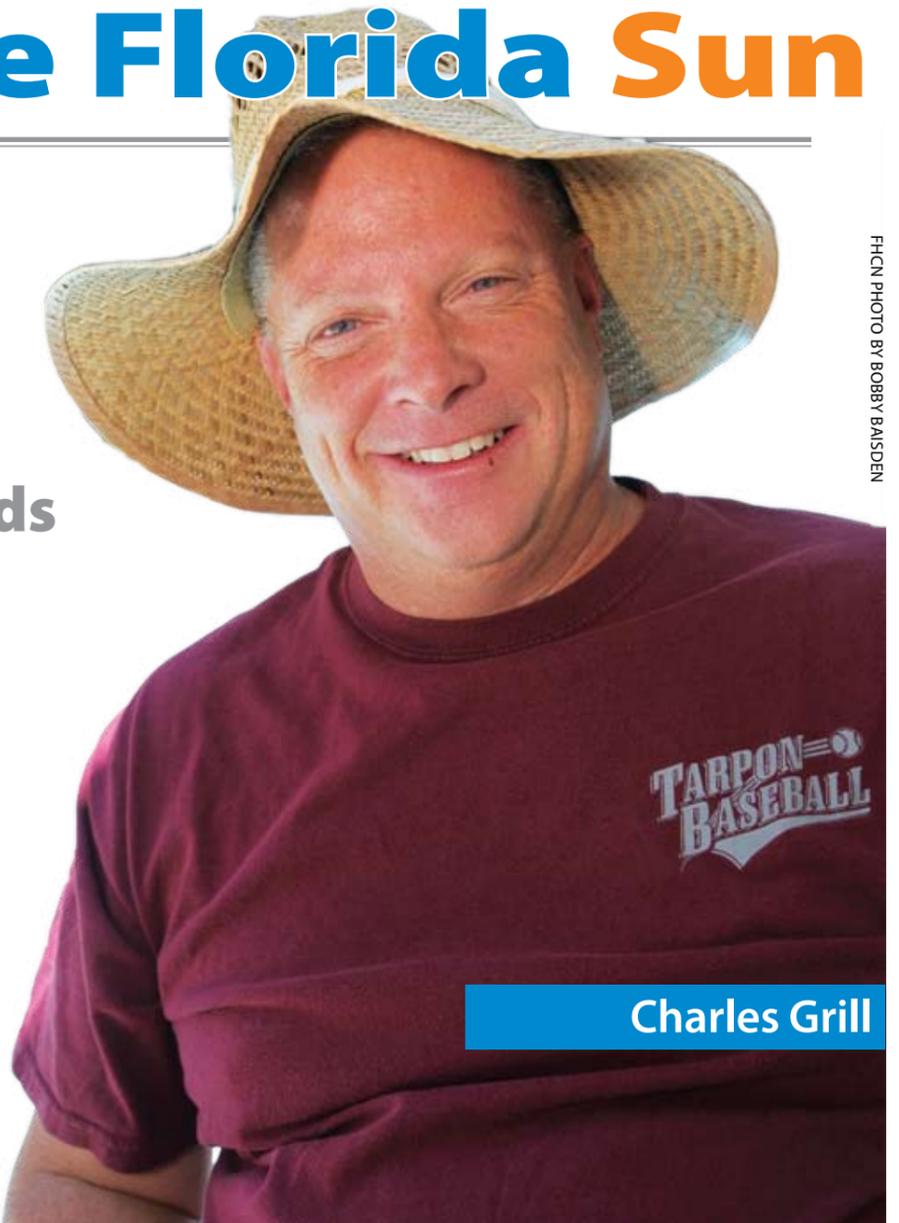


Surviving the Florida Sun

Preventative measures like applying sunscreen, wearing protective clothing, and seeking the shade significantly decrease the odds of developing skin cancer.



FHCH PHOTO BY BOBBY BAISDEN

Charles Grill

As a blond-haired, blue-eyed Floridian, Charles Grill has learned to be careful in the sun. Unfortunately, those lessons came to him courtesy of a condition called *basal cell carcinoma*, which is the most common form of skin cancer.

The busy father of three teenage boys – all baseball players – Charles says that much of his sun exposure comes from spending time outside with his sons. “I am outside quite a bit with the kids, most of the time at their ball games, and also doing yard work. I love the outdoors.”

And for years, he admits, he didn’t give much thought to protecting his fair skin, which ultimately led to some pretty serious skin problems and more than his share of trips to the dermatologist. “I’ve

ARMSTRONG DERMATOLOGY AND SKIN CANCER CENTER, P.A.

FRANK T. ARMSTRONG, DO
CHERI MORALES, ARNP

had many basal cell carcinomas; that’s what keeps popping up,” he shares. “It’s almost like my doctor is the weed killer, and as long as they keep popping up, he keeps getting rid of them.

“Dr. Armstrong can do anything, from freezing to surgery. In fact, he just did major surgery on my ear and it really turned out great.”

Committed to healthy skin

Frank Armstrong, DO, a board-certified dermatologist and board-certified internist with Armstrong Dermatology and Skin Cancer Center, is dedicated to helping his patients maintain the health of their skin and avoid the devastating effects of skin cancer.

“It is really important, especially for people with fair skin like Charles, to have adequate sunscreen and sun protection to prevent any further damage. People must be vigilant about protecting themselves,” Dr. Armstrong stresses.

And though most people are at least familiar with the advantages of sunscreen and other preventative measures, the doctor would like to increase that awareness and help people understand both the whys and the hows of skin protection.

Beginning with sunscreen basics, he explains that sunscreens are chemical agents that help protect the skin from the harmful effects of radiation. Though ultraviolet radiation comes in three forms, he continues, Ultraviolet C is blocked by the ozone layer, so sunscreens

are intended to protect against UVA and UVB rays.

One crucial point, he notes, is that sunscreens are not *sunblocks*. “There is nothing out there that blocks one hundred percent of ultraviolet radiation, at least nothing that I am aware of.”

When choosing a sunscreen, Dr. Armstrong explains, it is important to pay attention to the product’s SPF, or sun protection factor, as well as to understand that SPF refers only to UVB rays, not UVA. “An SPF of fifteen, which is the minimum that we recommend, blocks about ninety-three percent of the UVB rays. An SPF of thirty is not twice as good as SPF fifteen; rather, it blocks about ninety-seven percent of UVB.”

The key, he informs, is to understand the meaning behind the number. “Let’s say it takes ten minutes for a person to get a sunburn without sunscreen. With an SPF of fifteen, it would take fifteen times as long to get that same amount of sunburn, or one hundred and fifty minutes to get the same amount of redness.”

And though there is currently no ranking system in the United States for UVA protection, Dr. Armstrong ensures that there are products on the market that do shield against UVA rays. “Oxybenzone is a chemical ingredient in sunscreens that has been available for over twenty years and exhaustively studied,” he says. “It is excellent at UVA protection.”

That research is important, the doctor adds, given recent media attention to some common sunscreen ingredients, like oxybenzone and vitamin A, as well as questions over potential links to skin cancer. “I have looked extensively, and I could not find this information published in any peer-reviewed journal of dermatology. At best, these are controversial, flimsy reports that need a lot more research,” Dr. Armstrong asserts.

“It is my position, as well as the position of the Skin Cancer Foundation,

Give them a call!

The staff of Armstrong Dermatology and Skin Cancer Center welcomes new patients and their questions about skin health, including cancer screening, prevention and treatment methods; skin rejuvenation, acne treatment and skin disorders. For an appointment, please call the office, located at **9170 Oakhurst Road, Suite 1**, in Seminole, at **(727) 517-DERM (3376)**.

that sunscreens are safe and essential in protecting the skin.”

Other protective methods, the doctor shares, include seeking the shade and wearing sun-protective clothing when spending time outside. An area that is often overlooked, he adds, is that of lip protection. “It is important that sunscreens are also applied to the lip area because it is a very common place that I see skin cancer.”

And when applying that sunscreen, he recommends that people use at least one ounce, or a “shot glass,” of sunscreen about 30 minutes prior to going out in the sun, and that they reapply every two hours or after swimming or excessive sweating.

“There are numerous companies online that sell sun-protective clothing, like Coolibar® or Tilley,” the doctor informs. “And a good sunscreen I have been recommending is a product from La Roche-Posay, which is a company that has already had to adhere to the European UVA grading system, so I know their products have excellent UVA coverage.”

Protect your skin

After learning his lessons the hard way, Charles says he tries to pass that message on to his sons. “I keep preaching to the choir,” he shares. “It’s like trying to get your kids to floss. It was difficult for them

to understand what happens because of the sun, until this surgery with my ear. I think it put a little thought in their heads that they better start listening or they were going to end up like their dad.”

For himself, he adds, he now uses a sunscreen that protects him from both UVA and UVB rays. “I make sure it doesn’t come off, that I continuously reapply. And I have this silly-looking straw hat that covers everything for when I’m outside,” he says with a laugh.

“People should really try and protect themselves so they don’t have to go through what a lot of us fair-skinned people have to. Protect your skin. Cover up. Stay out of the sun,” he suggests. “Enjoy your recreation, but try not to do it in the peak part of the day.”

After learning so much, Charles says that he is grateful to Armstrong Dermatology and Skin Cancer Center for both the treatment and the education. “Dr. Armstrong is very intelligent, he knows what he’s doing, and he’s very caring about his patients,” he explains, adding that the whole office is very personable and makes patient follow-up a priority.

“Dr. Armstrong talks to you like he’s your friend, which is great for a doctor. There are not too many out there that have great bedside manner.”

FCHN – Brenda Klettke



Frank T. Armstrong, DO, is board certified by the American Osteopathic College of Dermatology, as well as by the American Board of Internal Medicine. After graduating with honors from Curry College in Milton, MA, he earned a degree in nuclear medicine from Salem State College in Salem, MA. Dr. Armstrong received his medical degree from the University of New England – College of Osteopathic Medicine, graduating with honors and receiving the “Graduate with Distinction” award. He completed his internal medicine residency at St. Vincent Hospital in Worcester, MA and trained in dermatology at Sun Coast Hospital/Nova Southeastern University in Largo, FL. As Co-Chief Resident at Sun Coast Hospital, Dr. Armstrong earned numerous awards, including the Koprince Lecture Award and the Connetics Resident Examination Award, as well as the distinction of being voted Resident Liaison by his colleagues.

For more information, please visit www.armstrongderm.com