

south Florida dermatologist who has participated in about a dozen of the golf tournament screenings, said. "We see skin cancers and a lot of precancerous spots. The screenings have saved a lot of lives."

For some reason, perhaps because women are more conscious of their skin than men, LPGA players take the steps to protect themselves from the sun far more than the male professionals. Walking with LPGA players Christina Kim and Paula Creamer at a pro-am tournament one year, I was struck by how often they applied sunscreen.

"We've lost some caddies to skin cancer out here and something like that really shakes people," said Kim. "They were one of us. So we've been more aware of it for a while, but I can tell you that we talk about it more now than ever. There's always sunscreen in our lockers at every event, and we'll remind each other sometimes. You know, at the turn, 'Hey, more sunscreen every nine holes, girl.'"

"It's on people's minds. It's amazing to think how people used to play golf for hours without putting any protection on their skin."

Dr. Wendy Roberts, the president of the dermatologic society, has her practice in Rancho Mirage, California, a Palm Springs Valley community known for its many golf courses. She said specific problem areas for golfers include the back of the hand not usually inside a golf glove and the lips, which should be protected by balm with sunblock.

"Men also completely forget about their ears, and they miss the patch of skin on the side of their neck just below the ear," Roberts said. "I remove a lot of cancers from that spot."

She added: "I have golfers tell me that they're being careful because they wear a hat or a visor, but when I ask if they put sunscreen on their legs, they say they didn't think of that because they're in the golf cart a lot. But the leg is the number one site for melanoma in a woman and number two in men."

The LPGA has a sun-safety initiative, and many of its players preach the sun-protection gospel. The Women's Dermatologic Society has been a partner with the help of a grant from L'Oréal USA and has created a Web site with golf sun-safety tips, www.playsafeinthesun.org. One tip that has stayed with me is the lesson of reapplying sunscreen every nine holes. If you think about it, if you were exercising on a beach for five straight hours, would you apply sunscreen just once?

tions online at www.lightningsafety.noaa.gov. A few other sobering facts: The majority of lightning victims are children or men younger than forty, which suggests to Jensenius that behavior or peer pressure plays a significant factor in who gets struck. About 85 percent of victims are men.

"Being safe is inconvenient," he said. "I'll add that most people struck by lightning do not die, but most are left with lifelong neurological problems."

The debilitating symptoms include memory loss, sleep disorders, chronic pain, numbness, stiffness in joints, muscle spasms, and depression.

"I know golf is a great sport," Jensenius said. "But it will be a great sport after the lightning has passed."

And after you have waited another thirty minutes.

Unlike lightning, which strikes quickly, the danger golfers face from exposure to the sun comes in opposite form—it accrues over a long period of time. But even casual golfers spend hundreds if not thousands of hours in the sun over a lifetime. We love to play, and since golf is such an absorbing task, our mind can easily be distracted from the beating our skin takes on an unrelentingly hot day.

And some golfers don't really get sunburned, or they have skin that appears to have adapted to the sun. In each case, damage to the skin can still be occurring. Other golfers rationalize that they are not really in the sun that often since they are riding in a golf cart. They are forgetting how long it can take four golfers to chip onto a green and putt out. Or how much time is spent waiting to hit on the tee box.

Golfers are highly susceptible to skin cancers brought on by overexposure to the sun.

The Women's Dermatologic Society for several consecutive years has conducted free skin cancer screenings at select LPGA Tour events across the nation, with doctors examining fans, caddies, and volunteers.

"About 45 percent of the people we see at those screenings have something on them that's going to have to be treated, and that's a much higher incidence rate than the general populace," Dr. Marta Rendon, a