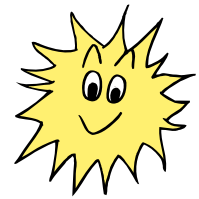


Protect Yourself from the Sun



Summer is a great time to have fun outdoors. It's also a time to take precautions to avoid sunburns, which can increase your risk of skin cancer.

Skin cancer is the most common form of cancer in the United States. Exposure to the sun's ultraviolet (UV) rays appears to be the most important environmental factor involved with developing skin cancer. During the summer months, UV radiation tends to be greater.

To help prevent skin cancer while still having fun outdoors, regularly use sun protective practices such as:



Seek shade, especially during midday hours (10:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.), when UV rays are strongest and do the most damage.



Cover up with clothing to protect exposed skin.



Get a hat with a wide brim to shade the face, head, ears, and neck.



Grab shades that wrap around and block as close to 100% of both UVA and UVB rays as possible.



Rub on sunscreen with sun protective factor (SPF) 15 or higher, and both UVA and UVB protection.

It's always wise to choose more than one way to cover up when you're in the sun. Use sunscreen, and put on a T-shirt... Seek shade, and grab your sunglasses... Wear a hat, but rub on sunscreen too. Combining these sun protective actions helps protect your skin from the sun's damaging UV rays.

UV rays reach you on cloudy and hazy days, as well as bright and sunny days. UV rays will also reflect off any surface like water, cement, sand, and snow. Additionally, UV rays from artificial sources of light, like tanning beds, cause skin cancer and should be avoided.

Frequently asked questions:

Q: What is the UV Index?

A: The UV Index was developed by the National Weather Service and the Environmental Protection Agency. It provides a forecast of the expected risk of overexposure to UV rays and indicates the degree of caution you should take when working, playing, or exercising outdoors.

The UV Index predicts exposure levels on a 0-10+ scale, where 0 indicates a low risk of overexposure and 10+ means a very high risk of overexposure. Calculated on a next-day basis for dozens of cities across the U.S., the UV Index takes into account clouds and other local conditions that affect the amount of UV radiation reaching the ground.

The level of danger calculated for the basic categories of the index are for a person with Type II skin. For a person with type II skin, for example, an Index value of 5 or 6 represents a moderate possibility of UV overexposure.

Q: What does a suntan indicate? Why does the skin tan when exposed to the sun?

A: The penetration of UV rays to the skin's inner layer results in the production of more melanin. That melanin eventually moves toward the outer layers of the skin and becomes visible as a tan.

A suntan is not an indicator of good health. Some physicians consider the skin's tanning a response to injury because it appears after the sun's UV rays have killed some cells and damaged others.

Q: Does it matter what kind of sunscreen I use?

A: Sunscreens come in a variety of forms such as lotions, gels, and sprays, so there are plenty of different options. There are also sunscreens made for specific purposes, such as the scalp, sensitive skin, and for use on babies. Regardless of the type of sunscreen you choose, be sure that you use one that blocks both UVA and UVB rays and that it offers at least SPF 15.

Q: What does a sunscreen's SPF rating mean?

A: Sunscreens are assigned a Sun Protection Factor (SPF) number according to their effectiveness in offering protection from UV rays. Higher numbers indicate more protection. As a rule of thumb, you should always use a sunscreen with at least SPF 15.

Q: Do sunscreens need to be reapplied during the course of a day?

A: You should follow the manufacturer's directions regarding reapplication or you risk not getting the protection that you might think you are getting. Though recently developed sunscreens are more resistant to loss through sweating and getting wet than previous sunscreens were, you should still reapply frequently, especially during peak sun hours or after swimming or sweating.

Q: How do sunscreens work?

A: Most sun protection products work by absorbing, reflecting, or scattering the sun's rays. Such products contain chemicals that interact with the skin to protect it from UV rays. Sunscreens help prevent problems related to sun exposure, such as aging skin and precancerous growths.

Keep in mind that sunscreen is not meant to allow you to spend more time in the sun than you would otherwise. That's why it is important to complement sunscreen use with other sun protection options: cover up, wear a hat and sunglasses, and seek shade.

Q: What kinds of clothing best protect my skin from UV rays?

A: Clothing that covers your skin protects against the sun's UV rays. Loose-fitting long-sleeved shirts and long pants made from tightly woven fabric offer the best protection. A wet T-shirt offers you much less UV protection than does a dry one.

If wearing this type of clothing isn't practical, at least try to wear a t-shirt or a beach cover-up. Keep in mind, however, that a typical t-shirt actually has an SPF rating substantially lower than the recommended SPF 15, so double-up on protection by using sunscreen with at least SPF 15 (and UVA and UVB protection) and staying in the shade when you can.

Q: Does protective clothing have to be a certain color?

A: Wearing clothing made of tightly-woven fabric is best for protecting your skin, regardless of the color. Darker colors, though, may offer more protection than lighter colors.

Q: Will a hat help protect my skin? Are there recommended styles for the best protection?

A: Hats can help shield your skin from the sun's UV rays. Choose a hat that provides shade for all of your head and neck. For the most protection, wear a hat with a brim all the way around that shades your face, ears, and the back of your neck.

If you choose to wear a baseball cap, you should also protect your ears and the back of your neck by wearing clothing that covers those areas, using sunscreen with at least SPF 15, or by staying in the shade.

Q: For the best protection, what material should I look for in a hat?

A: A tightly woven fabric, such as canvas, works best to protect your skin from UV rays. When possible, avoid straw hats with holes that let sunlight through.

Q: Are sunglasses an important part of my sun protection plan?

A: Yes. Sunglasses protect your eyes from UV rays and reduce the risk of cataracts. They also protect the tender skin around your eyes from sun exposure.

Q: What type of sunglasses best protects my eyes from UV rays?

A: Sunglasses that block both UVA and UVB rays offer the best protection. The majority of sunglasses sold in the United States, regardless of cost, meet this standard. Wrap-around sunglasses work best because they block UV rays from sneaking in from the side.

For additional information go to: http://www.cdc.gov/cancer/skin/basic_info/howto.htm