

Sun Safety

Spending time outside is a great way to be physically active, reduce stress, and get vitamin D. You can work and play outside without raising your skin cancer risk by protecting your skin from the sun.



Most skin cancers are caused by too much exposure to ultraviolet (UV) light. UV rays are an invisible kind of radiation that comes from the sun, tanning beds, and sunlamps. Protection from UV rays is important all year—not just during the summer. UV rays can reach you on cloudy and cool days, and they reflect off surfaces like water, cement, sand, and snow.

The best way to protect your skin from sun damage and lower your risk for skin cancer is to use a combination of sun-safe strategies, including:

- **Seek shade** – You can reduce your risk of sun damage and skin cancer by staying in the shade under an umbrella, tree, or other shelter. Your best bet to protect your skin is to use sunscreen or wear protective clothing when you're outside—even when you're in the shade.
- **Cover up with clothing** – When possible, wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants and skirts, which can provide protection from UV rays. If wearing this type of clothing isn't practical, try to wear a T-shirt or a beach cover-up. Clothes made from tightly woven fabric offer the best protection. A wet T-shirt offers much less UV protection than a dry one, and darker colors may offer more protection than lighter colors. Some clothing is certified under international standards as offering UV protection.
- **Wear a hat** – For the most protection, wear a hat that has a brim all the way around that shades your face, ears, and the back of your neck. A tightly woven fabric, such as canvas, works best to protect your skin from UV rays. Avoid straw hats with holes that let sunlight through. A darker hat may offer more UV protection. If you 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, or staying in the shade.
- **Wear sunglasses** – 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. Sunglasses that block both UVA and UVB rays offer the best protection. Wrap-around sunglasses work best because they block UV rays from sneaking in from the side.
- **Apply sunscreen*** – Apply broad spectrum sunscreen that blocks both UVA and UVB rays and has an SPF of 15 or higher before you go outside. Don't forget to put a thick layer on all exposed skin and reapply every 2 hours and after swimming, sweating, or toweling off. Get help for hard-to-reach places like your back. And remember, sunscreen works best when combined with other options!

**Sunscreen is not recommended for babies 6 months or younger. Keep infants out of the sun during midday and use protective clothing if they have to be in the sun.*

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ([cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov))