

How to Protect Yourself and Your Family From the Sun

Exposure to ultraviolet (UV) light can be harmful to your skin. In fact, most skin cancers are caused by too much exposure to UV light. UV light mainly comes from the sun. But harmful UV light can also come from tanning beds and sun lamps. There are things you can do to help reduce exposure to UV light – for yourself and your children.

Children need special attention to keep them protected from the sun. They usually spend more time outdoors and burn more easily. Babies younger than 6 months old should be kept out of direct sunlight. They should also wear hats and protective clothing. Sunscreen used on babies should only be put on small areas of exposed skin.



Use sunscreen and apply it correctly

Sunscreen can help protect your skin from the sun's UV rays. Use products with broad-spectrum protection (against both UVA and UVB rays). And choose a sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 30 or higher.

Be sure to check the expiration date. Sunscreen is usually good for 2 to 3 years. And don't forget to protect your lips by using a lip balm with sunscreen.

Sunscreen needs to be put on at least every 2 hours, but check the label just to be sure. Sunscreen can wash off when you sweat or swim and wipe off with a towel. So, sunscreen may need to be reapplied more often, even if it is "water resistant."

Tip: Use at least 1 ounce of sunscreen (about a shot glass or enough to fill the palm of your hand) to cover your arms, legs, neck, and face.

It's important to remember that sunscreen is just a filter. It does not block all UV rays. Use it, but take other steps to protect yourself, too.



Stay in the shade

Staying in the shade is one of the best ways to help prevent UV exposure. Try to stay out of direct sunlight between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., when UV light is strongest.

Tip: Use the shadow test to see how strong the sun's rays are. If your shadow is shorter than you are, the sun's rays are the strongest. Be sure to protect yourself.



Wear clothes to cover your skin

Long-sleeved shirts, long pants, or long skirts cover the most skin and are the most protective. Some clothing is made with UV protection.



Wear a wide brim hat

Be sure that your hat protects the eyes, forehead, nose, scalp, and ears. A hat with a 2- or 3-inch brim all around is best.



Avoid tanning beds and sun lamps

Tanning devices can cause long-term skin damage and increase your risk of skin cancer.



Wear sunglasses that block both UVA and UVB rays

Large-framed and wraparound sunglasses protect best. Children need smaller versions of protective adult sunglasses – do not use toy sunglasses.

Even with sunscreen, you should limit the amount of time you spend in the sun. Sunscreen does not block all UV rays.

For more information, go to [cancer.org/sunsafety](https://www.cancer.org/sunsafety) or call our 24/7 helpline at **1-800-227-2345**.

