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## How to Protect Your Skin from UV Rays

It's not possible to avoid sunlight completely, but there are ways to help ensure you're not getting too much sun when you are outdoors:

- Simply **staying in the shade**, especially during midday hours, is one of the best ways to limit your UV exposure from sunlight.
- Protect your skin with **clothing** that covers your arms and legs.
- Wear a wide-brimmed **hat** to protect your head, face, and neck.
- Wear **sunglasses** that block UV rays to protect your eyes and the skin around them.
- Use **sunscreen** with at least SPF 30 to help protect skin that isn't covered with clothing.

It's also important to **avoid tanning beds, booths, sunlamps**, and other artificial sources of UV radiation, and to **use protective clothing, UV shields, and filters** when exposed to UV in the workplace.

- [Seek shade](#)
  - [Protect your skin with clothing](#)
  - [Use sunscreen](#)
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sunlight too long. When outdoors, especially when the sun is strongest, try to stay under trees, umbrellas, and canopies, or use a portable sunshade. Even when you're in the shade, UV rays can still reach you by reflecting off other surfaces, so it's still good idea to also to protect your skin in other ways, such as wears protective clothing and using sunscreen.

## **Protect your skin with clothing**

When you are out in the sun, wear clothing to cover your skin. Clothes provide different levels of UV protection. Be aware that covering up doesn't block out all UV rays. If you can see light through a fabric, UV rays can get through, too.

Long-sleeved shirts, long pants, and hats can provide the most protection. UV rays can get through, but they can provide the most protection.

completely. Apply sunscreen generously, making sure to cover all parts of your body that aren't covered by clothing, including your face, ears, neck, arms, the tops of your feet, and your scalp and hairline. Protect your lips by using lip balm with sunscreen.

Sunscreen comes in many forms, including lotions, creams, and sprays. If you have sensitive skin, choose a sunscreen that doesn't irritate or cause a reaction. Always read the label carefully.

Reapply sunscreen at least every 2 hours, and more frequently if you are sweating or swimming. Remember that no sunscreen can protect you completely. Even if you use sunscreen with a high SPF, it doesn't mean you can stay in the sun longer. To learn about how to choose and apply sunscreen, see [How to Use Sunscreen](#)<sup>1</sup>.

## **Wear a wide-brimmed hat**

A hat with at least a 2- to 3-inch brim all around is ideal for sun protection. It protects areas that are often exposed to intense sun, such as the ears, eyes, forehead, nose, and scalp. A dark, non-reflective underside to the brim can also help lower the amount of UV rays reaching the face from reflective surfaces such as water.

A shade cap looks like a baseball cap with about 7 inches of fabric draping down the sides and back. This is also a good choice, and will provide more protection for the neck. These are often sold in sporting goods and outdoor supply stores. If you don't have a shade cap (or another good hat) available, you can make one by wearing a large handkerchief or bandana under a baseball cap. People who need to wear hard hats for work can use this technique, too, or find a hard hat with a built-in sun shade.

Keep in mind a baseball cap protects the front and top of the head but does not protect the neck or the ears, where skin cancers commonly develop. Straw hats are not as protective as hats made of tightly woven fabric since they can let more UV rays through.

## **Wear sunglasses that block UV rays**

UV-blocking sunglasses are important for protecting the delicate skin around the eyes, as well as the eyes themselves. Research has shown that spending long hours in the sun without protecting your eyes increases your chance of developing certain eye diseases, including possibly eye cancer.

The ideal sunglasses should block 99% to 100% of UVA and UVB rays. Before you buy, check the label to make sure they do. If there is no label, don't assume the sunglasses



Parents and caregivers should protect children from excess sun exposure by using the steps above: seek shade, use protective clothing, apply and reapply sunscreen, and put on a hat and sunglasses. It's important to protect children as fully as is reasonably possible.

Babies younger than 6 months should be kept out of direct sunlight and protected from the sun using hats, stroller covers, umbrellas, and protective clothing. Some experts don't recommend using sunscreen on babies. Check with your infant's doctor about using sunscreen and which type and brand might be best to use.

## Hyperlinks

1. [www.cancer.org/cancer/risk-prevention/sun-and-uv/how-to-use-sunscreen.html](http://www.cancer.org/cancer/risk-prevention/sun-and-uv/how-to-use-sunscreen.html)

## References

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US Food and Drug Administration. Sunscreen: How to Help Protect Your Skin from the Sun. 2023. Accessed at <https://www.fda.gov/drugs/understanding-over-counter->

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