

Take care in the sun.

Exposure to the sun provides many health benefits and we need sunshine to stay healthy. But getting sunburnt is a danger; not only is it very uncomfortable but it can lead to skin cancer. While many people associate a tan with looking healthy, a tan is a sign that our skin has been harmed by UV radiation and is trying to defend itself against further damage.



Use sunscreen.

The British Association of Dermatologists recommend using a 'high protection' sunscreen of at least SPF30 which also has a high UVA protection and applying it generously and frequently when in the sun. Don't rely on sunscreen alone, avoid storing sunscreens in very hot places as extreme heat can ruin their protective chemicals and remember to check the expiry date. Water washes sunscreen off, and the cooling effect of water can make you think you're not getting burned. So water resistant sunscreen is needed if you're swimming and should always be reapplied straight after you've been in the water, after towel-drying, sweating, or when it may have rubbed off.

Protect your skin with clothing.

The more skin that's covered, the better the protection. Choose clothing that's loose-fitting and deeper in colour. Look for materials with a close weave - holding the material up to the light is a good way to see how much light and UV rays will get through. Be aware when clothes get wet, they stretch and allow more UV rays through to your skin - a wet cotton T-shirt offers only half the protection of a dry one.

Wear a hat.

Choose a wide brimmed hat to protect the face, eyes, head and neck: caps protect the nose and forehead but provide poor protection for other parts of the face and the neck.

Wear sunglasses.

Too much UV exposure can cause cataracts and cancers of the eye. So you need a good quality pair of sunglasses and should choose a style that offers protection at the side of the eye, such as wraparound glasses. Take care to make sure they fit properly - poorly fitting glasses offer less protection as sunlight can reflect off the back face of the lens back into the eye.

Cancer Research UK recommend that when choosing sunglasses, you should look for the following:

- 'CE Mark' and British Standard
- UV 400 label
- 100% UV protection written on the label or sticker

Avoid the mid-day sun.

Spend time in the shade between the hours of 11am and 3pm when the sun's UV rays are strongest. If you have to go out at these times, or there's no shade around, the best way to protect your skin from the sun is to cover up with loose clothing, a wide-brimmed hat and good quality sunglasses.

Shadow rule.

A handy tip to help you work out when the sun is strong is the shadow rule which can be found on Cancer Research UK's website. All you need to do is to look at your shadow - if it's shorter than your height, this means the sun's UV rays are strong. So that's when you're more likely to burn and need to take particular care to protect your skin, especially if you sunburn easily.

Working outdoors.

If you work outdoors for example on construction sites, or spend a lot of time exposed to UV rays such as whilst driving long distances, you need to be extra diligent and protect yourself adequately. You also need to ensure that you are hydrated, take advantage of shady areas and watch out for fatigue. Ensure you wear sunscreen and appropriate clothing as directed by your employer.

Children and the sun.

The NHS advises that you need to take extra care with babies and children as their skin is much more sensitive than adult skin and damage caused by repeated exposure to sunlight could lead to skin cancer developing later in life.

Children under 6 months old should be kept out of direct strong sunlight. From March to October in the UK, children should:

- Cover up with suitable clothing
- Spend time in the shade - particularly between 11am and 3pm
- Wear at least SPF15 sunscreen