



University of Kentucky
College of Agriculture,
Food and Environment
Cooperative Extension Service

ADULT HEALTH BULLETIN



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THIS MONTH'S TOPIC: SUNSCREEN SAFETY



Extended time outside, whether you are walking, gardening, or reading a book, puts you at risk of sun damage, which in turn can cause sunburn, skin cancer, and premature aging. One of the best ways to protect yourself from sun damage is by wearing sunscreen anytime you spend time outdoors.

Sunscreen is important for protection from sunburn, early aging, and skin cancer. It works by protecting you from the ultraviolet rays that come from the sun. Specifically, it protects the skin from two different types of radiation: UVA and UVB. UVA, or Ultraviolet A, is the type of ray that causes the skin to age and creates lasting skin damage. UVB, or Ultraviolet B rays, cause sunburns. They both can cause skin cancer. When you see a sunscreen that is labeled "Broad Spectrum," it means that the sunscreen protects from both UVA and UVB rays.

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Disabilities
accommodated
with prior notification.

Put on broad spectrum sunscreen that has an SPF of 30 or higher before you go outside. Reapply every 2 hours.

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When selecting a sunscreen, the Skin Cancer Foundation and the American Cancer Society recommend an SPF of 30 or higher. The SPF, or Sun Protection Factor, is a measure of how long the skin can be in the sun before it starts to burn. The higher the number, the greater the protection. For example, an SPF of 45 means that you can stay outside in the sun 45 times longer without getting burned. However, sunscreens lose their effectiveness over time and as you sweat, so you need to reapply every two hours.

Now that it is getting warmer outside, you may start thinking about wearing sunscreen. However, we should be wearing sunscreen every time we step outside. That includes even in the middle of winter. The sun and its accompanying UVA and UVB rays are working all year, not just in the summer. UV rays can reach you on cloudy and cool days, and they reflect off of surfaces like water, cement, sand, and snow. Protecting yourself from the sun should be done from head to toe, including your face, lips, or any exposed skin. Follow these tips on how to enjoy time in the sun safely.

How to protect your skin from the sun

- **Wear sunscreen.** Put on broad spectrum sunscreen that blocks both UVA and UVB rays and has an SPF of 30 or higher before you go outside. Reapply every 2 hours.
- **UV protective clothing.** When possible, wear UV protective clothing. This can include shirts, long sleeves, arm sleeves, shorts, leg sleeves, and pants. If you do not have UV protective clothing, you can wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants and skirts, which can provide protection from UV rays.
- **Rock a hat.** Try to wear a hat that has a wide brim to shade your face, ears, and the back of your neck. A darker hat may offer more UV protection. If you wear a typical baseball-style cap, you should also protect your ears and the back of your neck by wearing clothing that covers those areas or applying sunscreen to exposed skin.



- **Use 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.

REFERENCES:

- https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/skin/basic_info/sun-safety.htm
- <https://www.hhs.gov/surgeongeneral/reports-and-publications/skin-cancer/consumer-booklet>

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