



UV Safety: What is it and how can I protect myself?



July is UV Safety Month. This month is dedicated to raising awareness about the dangers of UV radiation and promoting safe sun practices to prevent skin cancer and other UV-related health issues.

What is UV?

UV, which stands for ultraviolet, is a type of light that is given off by sun rays as well as other types of light sources such as some lamps, nail dryers, and dermatological equipment.

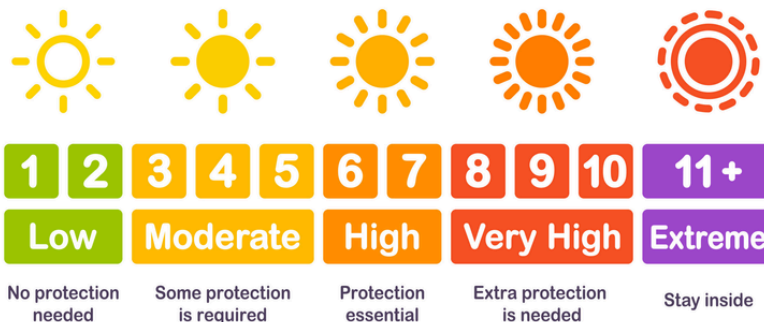
Types of UV Rays:

- **UVA:** These rays go into the skin more deeply than other rays. They play a major part in skin aging and wrinkling. They also cause skin cell damage that can lead to cancer.
- **UVB:** These rays are the main cause of sunburn. They tend to damage the skin's outer layers. Exposure to these rays is linked to most skin cancers.
- **UVC:** These are dangerous rays, but they don't reach our skin. The Earth's atmosphere absorbs UVC rays before they reach us.

What is the UV Index?

The ultraviolet index, or UV index, is an international standard measurement of the strength of the sunburn-producing ultraviolet radiation at a particular place and time. It notes the risk of overexposure to the sun's UV rays on a scale from 0 (low) to 11+ (extreme). The World Health Organization (WHO) uses a system of colors that correspond to UVI.

UV Index



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How can I protect myself against UV?

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.

What is SPF?

SPF stands for sun protection factor. The SPF number on sunscreen is the level of protection the sunscreen provides against UVB rays, which are the main cause of sunburn. For example, SPF30 is estimated to filter 96.7% of UVB radiation with 1/30th (3.3%) of UV reaching the skin. SPF50 is estimated to filter 98% of UVB radiation with 1/50th (2%) reaching the skin.

What does broad-spectrum sunscreen mean?

Broad-spectrum sunscreens filter both UVA and UVB rays. UVB is the principal cause of sunburn, but both UVA and UVB contribute to increased skin cancer risk.

Is water resistant sunscreen really effective?

Water resistant means it does not come off the skin during swimming or exercise. Sunscreens cannot be labeled as "waterproof" or "sweatproof" because these terms can be misleading. While a label may state a sunscreen is '4 hours water resistant', sunscreen still needs to be applied every two hours to maintain the same level of protection.

How to properly use sunscreen for the best protection:

- Apply a generous amount of sunscreen 15 to 30 minutes before you go outside.
- Use a water-resistant, broad-spectrum sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 30.
- Reapply sunscreen every 2 hours, even on cloudy days. Also reapply every hour after swimming or sweating.
- Check the expiration date on your sunscreen to make sure it's still effective. Don't use sunscreen that has expired.