

Sun Safety



The sun's rays feel good, but they're no friend to your skin. Though you won't see it right away, they give you wrinkles and age spots, and they're the leading cause of skin cancer.

Over time, the sun's ultraviolet (UV) light harms fibers in the skin called elastin. When these fibers break down, the skin begins to sag and stretch. It also bruises and tears more easily, taking longer to heal.

Some tips to enjoy the sun, but avoid the damage:

- **Shade** You can reduce your risk of skin damage and skin cancer by seeking shade under an umbrella, tree, or other shelter before you need relief from the sun. You should still use sunscreen or protective clothing when in the shade.
- **Sunscreen** Wear sunscreen every day, in all weather and in every season. It should have a sun protection factor (SPF) of 30 and say "broad-spectrum" on the label, which means it protects against the sun's UVA and UVB rays. Put at least one ounce on skin exposed to the sun at least 15 minutes before going outside.
- **Clothing** When possible, long-sleeved shirts and long pants and skirts can provide protection from UV rays. Clothes made from tightly woven fabric offer the best protection. A wet t-shirt offers much less UV protection than a dry one, and darker colors may offer more protection than lighter colors. Some clothing certified under international standards comes with information on its UV protection.

If wearing this type of clothing isn't practical, at least try to wear a t-shirt or a beach cover-up. Keep in mind that a typical T-shirt has an SPF rating lower than 15, so use other types of protection as well.

