

Sun protection - Some simple guidelines

1. Avoid going out into the sun between the hours of 11.00am and 3.00pm. This is when the sun is at its strongest. Plan outdoor activities earlier or later in the day.
2. Protect your skin with clothing, including a brimmed hat, T-shirt and sunglasses when out in the sun. Tightly woven materials such as cotton offer greater protection. Balding men should always wear a hat when outdoors.
3. Sit in the shade but remember that sand, snow, concrete and water can reflect sun into shaded areas so you can still get burnt.
4. Apply sun cream at least 30 minutes before going out in the sun and reapply every 2 hours as long as you are outdoors. Reapply after swimming or any other vigorous activity, sweating, towel drying or if you think it has rubbed off.
Use a sun cream which has a sun protection factor (SPF) of 30 or higher, and apply liberally and evenly - more is better in terms of sun protection. Do not forget areas such as the sides and back of the neck, the temples and the ears.
Do not rely on sun cream alone. While it does offer protection, physical barriers such as clothes and shade are just as important.
5. Sun creams also have a star rating on the packaging. This indicates the level of protection from UVA which causes skin ageing as well as skin cancer. Choose a sun cream which has a high SPF and a high star rating. The brand does not matter as long as you apply it correctly.
6. Use a sun cream for activities at high altitude such as climbing and skiing, as the risk of burning is greater the higher up you go. The sun can also be stronger in hot countries.
7. You should wear sun cream everyday if you: have fair skin that easily burns, work outdoors, have lots of moles, or have had a skin cancer.
8. Don't forget to use sun cream on cool and cloudy days as the sunlight is only scattered by clouds and still reaches the earth's surface. Also, clouds can clear quickly to leave you exposed to strong sunlight. In this country, sun cream should be applied daily from as early as March, through to October.
9. If you develop an allergic reaction (rash) to your sun cream, stop using it and talk to your pharmacist about changing to a different type. If the problem persists, see your GP.
10. Certain drugs or medicines can cause you to be more sensitive to the sun or can cause rashes when you go in the sun. Some perfumes and cosmetics can also do this. Check with your pharmacist or doctor about your medicines as you may need to be extra careful in the sun.
11. Sunbeds can cause sunburn, ageing changes in the skin and can significantly increase your risk of skin cancer. Using a sunbed before you go on holiday does not provide your skin with any extra protection from the sun. *There is no such thing as a 'safe sunbed'.*
12. Sunbathing is not recommended. A tan is a sign of damage to your skin.
13. Keep babies and young children out of the sun. Keep them covered using clothes, shade and sun cream to protect them. Teach children simple guidelines about sun protection whilst they are young. Sun damage occurs with each unprotected sun exposure and accumulates over the course of a lifetime.
14. Sunlight helps the skin to produce vitamin D which is important for healthy bones and can prevent other health issues. Small amounts of incidental sunlight, as you might get through daily activities, may help to boost vitamin D levels. However, protecting your skin in the sun from burning should be a priority. Public Health England recommends a daily intake of 10 micrograms daily, since it is difficult to get this from your diet and as it is recommended that people with AK protect their skin from the sun, you may want to consider taking a daily supplement containing 10 micrograms of vitamin D all year round. These are readily available from pharmacies, health food shops and supermarkets. See [NHS advice for more information](#).