

# Stay sun safe



It's important to protect your skin from the harmful affects of the sun. It is particularly important to take care of your skin as you age.

Your skin is the largest organ in your body and needs care and attention to stay healthy. The older you are, the more time your skin has been exposed to environmental stressors.

Australia is blessed with plenty of sunny weather, but unfortunately has one of the highest rates of skin cancer in the world.

The good news is that there are simple steps you can take to keep safe in the sun.



# What is UV?

UV is short for ultraviolet radiation and is the main cause of skin cancers.

Typically, the UV is at its highest levels in the middle of the day. You are not only at risk of UV radiation when it is hot and sunny outside. The UV can be at harmful levels even when clouds are blocking the sun. UV can also reflect off surfaces like water, concrete, and snow.

You should use sun protection when the UV is 3 and above on the UV index.

## Keep track of UV levels with the SunSmart app

By keeping track of UV levels, and using sun protection, you can work, rest, and do what you love outdoors safely.

You can keep track of the UV index with the free SunSmart Global UV app. You can get the free SunSmart app from the [Apple App Store](#) or the [Google Play Store](#).





## 5 simple steps

A common misconception is that UV levels are only harmful during the summer months. Follow these five tips to look after your skin year round.

### 1. Wear protective clothing

Wearing protective clothing is your first line of defence against UV radiation. Ensure your clothes are in good condition and covering as much skin as possible.

### 2. Wear a hat

Wear a hat to protect you face, scalp, ears, and neck from the sun. Consider a broad brim or legionnaires hat as it offers more protection than a cap.

### 3. Put on sunglasses

Close fitting wraparound sunglasses can help protect the skin around your eyes as well as the eyes themselves. Make sure they meet the Australian standards for UV protection.

## 4. Seek shade

If you need to be out and about during times when the UV is at its highest, seek shade out of the direct sunlight. You can find a tree, use an umbrella, or seek the shade of a building.

## 5. Apply sunscreen correctly and regularly

Use a broad-spectrum sunscreen that protects you from both UVA and UVB radiation. Make sure that it is labelled SPF30 or higher. Apply the sunscreen 20 minutes before going into the sun and reapply every two hours. For more information on applying sunscreen correctly, [click here](#).



# Medication and UV

Some medications can cause photosensitivity and increase your risk of sunburn. They can also cause other skin reactions when in contact with UV. Ask your health professional if photosensitivity is a side effect you may experience for any new or existing medications. This is particularly important if you use any of these common medications:

- Antibiotics
- Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) such as ibuprofen
- Antipsychotics
- Target therapies (drugs or other substances that target specific molecules that cancer cells need to survive and spread).

## Check your skin regularly

Skin cancer is easier to treat the earlier it is identified. Get to know your skin including any marks, moles, or freckles you may have. If an existing mark changes colour, size, or texture, visit your health professional as soon as you can for a check-up.

There are specific skin cancer clinics that can check, map, and record the blemishes and moles on your skin.

For more information on how to check your skin for skin cancer, [click here](#).



## Vitamin D

Vitamin D is important for maintaining good health and ageing well. The good news is that you generally receive an adequate dose of Vitamin D through incidental UVB exposure.

It is important to use the five steps of sun protection, including sunscreen, any time the UV is over 3. Sunscreen has a very minimal effect on Vitamin D absorption. Keep track of UV levels particularly in late autumn and winter. The UV tends to be higher during the middle of the day. Take the opportunity to enjoy the sunshine in the early morning or late afternoon.

If you have any concerns over Vitamin D deficiency, consult your health professional.

# Sun protection and dark skin

You may need more exposure to sunlight if you are naturally darker-skinned or if you cover more of your skin for religious reasons. Having naturally darker skin does not protect you against UV or skin cancer.

For more information about sun protection and dark skin, [click here](#).

## More helpful information

If you'd like to learn more about staying sun safe, follow the links below:

- [Slip, slop, slap: Staying sun safe as an older person](#)
- [SunSmart - get to know your skin](#)
- [Cancer Council sun safety guides](#)

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