

Summer Fun: How to Protect Your Skin

Summer is just around the corner, and that means more time outside. This increased sun exposure brings vitamin D and wide smiles, but too much sun can be dangerous. Before those long, sun-filled days, it's important to know how to protect your skin from possible damage.

Sun Damage

The ultraviolet, or UV, rays of the sun are both helpful and harmful. These rays are used by the skin to produce vitamin D and the ever-elusive summertime tan. Too much of these rays, however, causes the skin to burn and blister. While sunburns are uncomfortable, they can lead to more serious issues. Prolonged exposure to UV rays can cause long-term problems such as:

- Loss of skin elasticity
- Early aging
- Higher risk of skin cancer



Sun Protection

Fortunately, there are ways to combat these problems. When you're out in the sun this summer, remember these four steps to protect your skin from harmful UV rays.

1. Always use sunscreen

Sunscreen helps protect exposed skin from UV rays. A thick layer should be applied, even on cloudy days. Remember to check the expiration date and the sun protection factor (SPF). Those with fairer skin, use a higher-SPF sunscreen.

2. Wear protective clothing

It's important to wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants whenever possible. Some clothes provide a higher SPF than others, but all clothes provide some protection. The following accessories can provide even more coverage:

- **Hats**
Hats with bills and brims cover some of the more sensitive areas. Wide-brimmed hats provide the most coverage because the face, neck, and ears are fully covered.
- **Sunglasses**
Eyes are sensitive to UV rays as well. Sunglasses protect the eyes and surrounding skin from dangerous levels of exposure.

3. Find shade

Break up long periods of sun exposure by seeking shade. Find a shelter, tree, or umbrella to provide coverage whenever possible.

4. Get frequent skin cancer screenings

The most important preventative measure you can take is to talk with your doctor. Frequent screenings will identify any markers or risk factors for skin cancer. Early detection is the key to curing skin cancer.

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