



Frequently Asked Questions

Understanding the UV Index

What is the UV Index?

- ☀ The UV Index (short for "Ultraviolet Ray Index") forecasts the amount of skin-damaging UV radiation reaching the Earth's surface when the sun is highest in the sky (solar noon) and does not account for reflective surfaces. It was created to help people make informed decisions about the amount of time that they spend in the sun.
- ☀ The higher the UV Index, the more protection you need, i.e. , higher SPF, more protective clothing, etc.

How do I read the UV Index?

- ☀ The UV Index uses a numerical scale to rate the strength of the sun's UV force. The higher the UV Index level, the greater the strength of the sun's UV rays — and the faster you can burn.
- ☀ The UV Index ranges from 0 (low level) to 10+ (very high level) and depends on factors that include latitude, elevation, ozone, and local air pollution.

How do I use the UV Index number?

- ☀ The UV Index is issued daily by the national weather service for different regions of the country. Make a habit of checking the UV Index so that you'll know how much sun protection you'll need each day.
- ☀ You can get the daily UV Index at www.sunsafetyalliance.org

Can I really use my shadow to measure UV exposure?

- ☀ If your shadow is taller than you are (in the early morning and late afternoon), your UV exposure is likely to be low.
- ☀ If your shadow is shorter than you are (at midday), you are being exposed to high levels of UV radiation.

Understanding Sun Protection

How can I get complete sun protection?

- ☀ No one product or method of sun protection is a complete sunblock. That is why it is important to practice a variety of sun-safe measures everyday.
- ☀ It is important to wear sunscreen and UV blocking sunglasses, avoid the midday sun, and wear tightly woven protective clothing - long sleeved shirts and pants when possible - and wide-brimmed hats.

What is SPF?

- ☀ "SPF" stands for "Sun Protection Factor."
- ☀ The SPF number indicates how much longer a person wearing sunscreen can stay in the sun before beginning to burn. For example, SPF 15 allows someone to stay in the sun 15 times longer without burning than if he or she were not wearing sunscreen.
- ☀ SPF numbers generally range from 2 to 50.

Is an SPF higher than 15 really necessary?

- ☀ For adequate protection, the American Academy of Dermatology and the Sun Safety Alliance recommend that everyone use a broad spectrum sunscreen all year with an SPF of at least 15. For children, the Sun Safety Alliance follows the guidance of the American Academy of Dermatology that recommends sunscreen products with an SPF of 30.
- ☀ Higher SPF's have two key benefits: 1) you get more UVA/UVB coverage, and 2) the longer you use a higher SPF product, the greater the increase in your lifetime reduction of cumulative UV exposure.

Dark colored vs. white and wet vs. dry clothing: is there a difference?

- ☀ A wet, light-colored shirt transmits almost as much light as wearing nothing, therefore dry, dark clothing is a better protection option to maximize protection.
- ☀ Many typical cotton T-shirts and summer weight fabrics can allow 50% of harmful UVB rays through to your skin when dry and 10% to 20% more when wet.
- ☀ Tightly-woven clothing offers the best skin protection, regardless of the color.

Doesn't everyone need a certain amount of sunlight for things like vitamin D?

- ☀ Vitamin D is an essential nutrient for maintaining good nutritional health. While sunlight exposure is the most commonly known way to receive vitamin D, the recommended amounts of vitamin D can be achieved through many food sources such as cheese, butter, fish, meat, and fortified milk and cereals, or through a Vitamin D supplement.

Are any hat and sunglasses ok?

- ☀ For the best protection, wear a wide-brimmed hat and UV blocking sunglasses.

Are You Using Sunscreen correctly?

How should sunscreen be applied?

- ☀ Follow directions and shake the bottle before using.
- ☀ Thoroughly rub sunscreen over skin to make sure the coverage is even.
- ☀ Make sure all skin is covered (including neck, ears and lips).
- ☀ For people with thin or thinning hair, apply sunscreen to the scalp as well.

How much sunscreen should I use on my child?

- ☀ More Squeezes Please! Sunscreens need to be applied liberally and evenly over all exposed areas of the body. If in doubt, think More Squeezes Please!

When should I apply sunscreen?

- ☀ Before going outside.
- ☀ It is best to apply sunscreen everyday, as UV rays penetrate even clouds, mist, and fog.
- ☀ Before doing any outdoor activities, whether it's overcast or sunny, since UV rays penetrate clouds, mist, and fog.

- ☀ Whenever you're spending time outdoors—and not just in the pool. It is important to use sunscreen at picnics, during walks, hiking, riding in a car, or for any outdoor activity.
- ☀ Be extra careful near highly reflective surfaces such as concrete, water, or snow. These surfaces intensify the strength of the sun's rays, reflecting back 85 to 90% of its UV rays.
- ☀ Sunscreen should be applied often, but particularly after swimming, perspiring, and toweling off.

Are You At Risk For Skin Cancer?

What is skin cancer?

- ☀ Skin cancer is a disease that occurs when cancer cells are found in the outer layers of the skin. The cancer can be found in three types of skin cells: basal, squamous, and melanocyte.
 - Although basal cell and squamous cell carcinomas can be cured if detected and treated early, these cancers can cause considerable damage and disfigurement.
 - Melanoma, the most serious form of skin cancer, originates in melanocytes, the cells which produce the pigment that colors our skin, hair and eyes.

Who is at risk for developing skin cancer?

- ☀ Anyone can burn—no matter who you are or where you live. Some people, however, may be at higher risk than others. Having one or more of the following risk factors could increase your risk for developing skin cancer.
 - Fair skin that easily burns or freckles.
 - A history of blistering sunburns in childhood.
 - Spending a large amount of time outdoors, or living at high elevations.
 - Having a family history of skin cancer.
 - Appearance of moles.
 - Blond or red hair; blue, green or grey eyes.

How can I tell if skin cancer is developing?

- ☀ There can be many warning signs including: a change in a mole, a sore that does not heal, a skin growth that increases in size, or a spot that continues to itch, hurt, or scab.

Are skin cancer rates really on the rise?

- ☀ Yes. Skin cancer is the most common form of cancer in the U.S., with one million cases diagnosed each year.
 - Melanoma is the fast growing cancer in the U.S., with more than 51,000 cases diagnosed each year.
 - Someone is diagnosed with melanoma every 10 minutes.
 - Someone dies from skin cancer every hour.
 - Melanoma cases in the U.S. have more than doubled in the past 2 decades.

Can using sunscreen really make a difference?

- ☀ Yes. Regular use of sunblock with an SPF of 15 or higher during the first 18 years of life can lower the risk of certain types of skin cancer by up to 78%.

For more information, please visit www.sunsafetyalliance.org