

# Sun Safety

## The best ways to protect yourself from the sun

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### Your sun protection plan:

- Use sunscreen with SPF of at least 30
  - Wear sun protective clothing and sunglasses
  - Know about sun exposure so you can limit it when possible
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### Choose a good sunscreen

Using sunscreen is an important part of your sun protection plan. Sunscreens come in cream, lotion, stick and spray forms. They contain substances that stop harmful ultraviolet light from entering your skin.

- Look for an SPF number on the label. An SPF (Sun Protection Factor) of at least 30 is recommended for the Seattle area.
- Choose a sunscreen that says it protects against both UVA and UVB rays. Also, look for sunscreens that have Parsol 1789 (avobenzone), zinc oxide or titanium dioxide.
- For babies and for children with sensitive skin, use a sunblock containing zinc oxide and/or titanium dioxide. Types of brands to select include:
  - Blue Lizard baby or sensitive skin
  - Vanicream sunscreen
  - Neutrogena sensitive skin
- Wear sunscreen year-round if you have very fair skin. Also use it if you are taking medicines or have a health problem that makes you more sensitive to the sun.
- Don't forget to put sunscreen on your lips. Look for the same SPF in a lip balm.

Note: Spray sunscreens and sunscreens containing insect repellent are not recommended. This is because spray sunscreens can be dangerous if inhaled or swallowed and insect repellent should not be reapplied as often as sunscreen.

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### Wear sun protective clothing and sunglasses

Sun protective clothing is a fairly new product for protection against the sun. Sun protective clothing can be used with, but not in place of, sunscreens. The material used to make this clothing is tightly woven and helps block some of the sun's rays. You can find shirts, pants, coveralls and hats with neck flaps. They come in infant, children and adult sizes. Many clothing companies sell sun protective clothing.

Here are a few stores who sell sun protective clothing:

- Coolibar 800-926-6509 [coolibar.com](http://coolibar.com)
  - Sun Precautions 800-882-7860 [sunprecautions.com](http://sunprecautions.com)
  - UV Skinz 877-887-5496 [uvskinz.com](http://uvskinz.com)
  - Lands' End [landsend.com](http://landsend.com) search for "Rash guard"
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### To Learn More

- Dermatology  
206-987-2158
- Ask your child's healthcare provider
- [seattlechildrens.org](http://seattlechildrens.org)

### Free Interpreter Services

- In the hospital, ask your nurse.
- From outside the hospital, call the toll-free Family Interpreting Line, 1-866-583-1527. Tell the interpreter the name or extension you need.

### What should I know about sun exposure?

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#### What is UVA and UVB light?

The sun beams its energy to earth as heat, visible and invisible light. UVA (ultraviolet A) and UVB (ultraviolet B) light is the invisible light. These are the rays that can damage skin, resulting in skin cancer and wrinkles.

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#### What are the 5 factors of sun protection?

1. **Time:** Sun is strongest between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. Try to avoid direct sun these times of day.
  2. **Geography:** Sun is most intense near the equator and at high altitudes (up in the mountains). If you live in Mexico, the sun is stronger than in Seattle.
  3. **Weather:** Clouds and smog do not totally block UVA and UVB light from reaching the earth.
  4. **Reflectivity:** Sand, water, cement, roads and snow reflect over ½ of the sun rays. You can burn more easily when you're near these types of surfaces.
  5. **Skin type:** People with darker skin have more natural protection from the sun.
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#### How can I best protect myself and family from the sun?

- Beware of the sun's reflectivity from sand, snow and water.
  - Wear protective clothing when you plan to be outside for a long time.
  - Use sunscreen with sun protection factor (SPF) of 30 or greater. Specific recommendations for higher number SPF depend on skin type, sensitivity to the sun, and other risk factors.
  - Use **a lot** of sunscreen. A golf ball sized amount, even for a child. Put sunscreen on 20 to 30 minutes before going outside and reapply at least every 2 hours. Reapply sunscreen after going into the water or after sweating a lot. Use water resistant sunscreen for water activities.
  - Wear sunglasses with UV protection.
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#### What exactly is SPF (Sun Protection Factor)?

The "SPF" number on the sunscreen bottle's label is a guide on how long (in minutes) you can stay in the sun before risking sunburn. But keep in mind, the amount of time you can stay in the sun depends on the 5 factors of sun protection listed above. We recommend an SPF of at least 30. "Water resistant" sunscreen should be used for water activities or sports, but needs to be reapplied at least every 40 to 80 minutes, depending on the label. Reapply more often if you dry off with a towel.

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