Sun safety tips: Your future self will thank you



If you're like 87% of Americans, you don't wear sunscreen daily.[1] But consider this: Your skin is the body's largest organ and is your first defense against the outside world. Wearing sunscreen every day is one of the easiest ways to protect your health and youthful appearance.

Why sun safety is preventive healthcare

Skin cancer is the most common form of cancer in the United States, affecting one in five Americans in their lifetimes.[2] The American Cancer Society estimates nearly 105,000 new cases of melanoma in 2025 and more than 8,400 deaths.[3] While the risk of melanoma increases with age — the average age of diagnosis is 66 years old — it's also frequently diagnosed in young adults.[3]

The two most common, though less fatal, skin cancers are basal and squamous cell carcinomas, with around 5.4 million cases diagnosed in the U.S. each year.[2] About 90% of these skin cancers are associated with ultraviolet (UV) radiation exposure from the sun and tanning beds.[2]

The most visible risk of not protecting your skin from harmful UV rays is sun-damaged skin, which includes sunburn, fine lines, wrinkles, and age spots. The Skin Cancer Foundation reports that UV exposure causes 90% of visible facial aging.[4]

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5 ways to protect your skin from the sun

1. **Find a sunscreen you like ... and wear it every day**, even on cloudy days in winter. Sunscreen comes in various formulas and sun protection factors (SPFs); look for broad-spectrum SPF 30 or higher. Your dermatologist or primary care provider can also suggest the right sunscreen for your skin type.
2. **Reapply sunscreen every two hours** or after sweating, swimming, or drying off with a towel.
3. **Stay in the shade**, especially between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., when the sun's UV rays are the strongest.
4. **Wear protective gear**, such as a wide-brimmed hat, loose-fitting long-sleeved shirts, and long pants. If you spend a lot of time working or exercising outdoors, purchase clothing with an ultraviolet protection factor (UPF) of 30 or higher.
5. **Don't forget your eyes and lips.** Not all sunglasses protect your eyes. Look for sunglasses that offer 100% UV protection, which means they block both UVA and UVB rays. Use a lip balm with SPF to lower your risk of dry, sunburned lips.



If you haven't had a skin exam this year, schedule one soon. If you need to find a doctor, use our Find Care feature on the **Sydney℠ Health** app or **anthem.com**.

Schedule a yearly skin check

Add an annual skin exam with a dermatologist or primary care provider to your preventive care plan. Skin exams detect skin cancer early, when it's easier to treat.

Your doctor will look for new or changing moles or spots, especially in places you can't easily see, like your back or scalp. When caught early, the five-year survival rate for melanoma is 99%.[2] That drops to 35% once it spreads to other organs.[2]

Daily sun protection and yearly skin exams will help prevent or catch skin cancer early. It will also help you put your best face forward as you age. Your future self will thank you.

1 Skin Cancer Foundation: *5 Secrets of Sunscreen Users in the U.S.* (June 12, 2024): skincancer.org.
2 Skin Cancer Foundation: *Skin Cancer Facts & Statistics* (January 2025): skincancer.org.
3 American Cancer Society: *Key Statistics for Melanoma Skin Cancer* (January 16, 2025): cancer.org.
4 Skin Cancer Foundation: *Photoaging: What You Need to Know About the Other Kind of Aging* (June 7, 2021): skincancer.org/blog.

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