

Four Ways to: Stay Sun Safe

by Elizabeth Barker

1 Take Cover

If you spend more than 20 minutes in the sun, don't count on thin cotton clothing for protection. The average white T-shirt offers minimal UV defense. Apply sunblock under your clothes or stick with darker, tightly woven fabrics (ones you can't see through). The supersensitive might consider specialized clothing (see [skincancer.org/clothing](#)) with an ultraviolet protection factor of at least 50, which blocks 98 percent of all UV rays, notes Denver-based dermatologist Barbara Reed, M.D. To shield your scalp from UVA and UVB rays, throw on a hat or brush broad-spectrum sunscreen powder through your hair. A recent study found that people with scalp and neck melanomas die at nearly twice the rate of those with melanoma in the extremities.

Protect your skin from harmful rays all summer long with these key tips

2 Do Damage Control

You can soothe the pain of a sunburn and help the healing process with a gel that's 90 to 100 percent aloe vera, says Reed. Apply the gel several times daily until the sunburn subsides, and don't peel off blisters—they act as natural bandages, she says. Additionally, take time to check your body every month for changes to your skin. Watch for pink areas, spots that are tender to the touch, or moles that have altered in size, shape, color, or feel, advises Reed. If something looks suspicious, check it out with your doctor.

3 Get Sunblock Savvy

For defense against both UVB and UVA rays (the two types of radiation linked to skin cancer), opt for a broad-spectrum sunblock. How do you know what to choose? Look for products that contain zinc oxide or titanium dioxide, two of the most stable sunblock ingredients available, suggests Amy Derick, M.D., a Barrington, Illinois-based dermatologist. Go for an SPF of at least 15, and don't skimp when slathering it on. About a shot-glass-full should sufficiently cover all exposed areas. Smear it on about 20 minutes before heading out so it can penetrate your skin, and reapply every two hours.

4 Don't Forget

Pay attention to often-neglected areas. For instance, most people forget to apply sunscreen to their feet, ears, and the back of their necks and hands, says Reed. Lips are often overlooked as well. Wear an SPF 15 lip balm made with zinc oxide or titanium dioxide before applying lipstick. You should also be wary of gloss; it can stimulate UV penetration. And while including broad-spectrum foundations and moisturizers with an SPF of 15 makes for a sun-smart beauty routine, remember this only takes you so far. "Unless you're reapplying your makeup every two hours, that initial layer isn't going to be enough," Derick points out. So keep a facial sunblock on hand as a backup.

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