

When do I need to protect myself?

By knowing your skin type and using the UV index, you can work out when you need to protect yourself from the sun.

UV Index	Skin type	I and II	III and IV	V	VI
1 2	●	●	●	●	●
3 4	●	●	●	●	●
5	●	●	●	●	●
6	●	●	●	●	●
7 8 9	●	●	●	●	●
10	●	●	●	●	●

● Low risk:

No protection needed.

● Medium risk:

Take care around midday and do not spend too long in the sun unprotected.

● High risk:

Cover up and spend time in the shade between 11am and 3pm. Use at least factor 15 sunscreen on exposed skin.

● Very high risk:

Be sure to cover up and stay in the shade between 11am and 3pm. And use at least factor 15 sunscreen. If your skin goes pink or red after time in the sun then you need to do more to protect your skin.

Who is most at risk?

Some people are more likely than others to develop skin cancer. These people tend to have one or more of the following:

- fair skin that burns easily in strong sun
- lots of moles or freckles
- red or fair hair
- light-coloured eyes
- a personal or family history of skin cancer
- a history of sunburn.

What is sunburn?

Sunburn does not have to be raw, peeling or blistering. If your skin has gone red in the sun, it is sunburnt. Sunburn is a clear sign that the DNA in your skin cells has been damaged by too much UV radiation. Over time this damage can build up and lead to skin cancer.

How much sun do we need?

We all need some sunshine to make enough vitamin D to build and maintain strong bones. But it is not possible to give a one size fits all recommendation on how much sun is needed. Enjoying the sun safely while taking care not to burn should help most people get a good balance. You should not have to redden or burn your skin to make enough vitamin D.

Some people are more likely to have low vitamin D levels. These people include those with naturally brown or black skin, people who wear clothing that fully covers them and pregnant women. The government recommends that these people take a supplement of 10µg (400IU) a day.

Further information

About being SunSmart

Visit Cancer Research UK's SunSmart website cruk.org/sunsmart

Check the UV index forecast for the UK by going to metoffice.gov.uk and searching for UV index.

About cancer

For more about cancer visit our patient information website cruk.org/cancer-help

If you want to talk in confidence about cancer, call our information nurses on freephone **0808 800 4040**.

Order our full range of leaflets free online at cruk.org/leaflets

About Cancer Research UK

CRUK pioneers life-saving research to bring forward the day when all cancers are cured. From our volunteers and supporters to our scientists, doctors and nurses, we're all here to save more lives and prevent, control and cure all cancers. If you would like to support our work, please call **0300 123 1861** or visit our website cruk.org

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Too much ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun or sunbeds is the main cause of skin cancer.

By enjoying the sun safely, taking care not to burn and avoiding sunbeds, you can reduce the risk of developing skin cancer.

In this leaflet you can find out about:

- how to reduce the risk of skin cancer
- when you need to protect your skin
- how to be SunSmart.

How to be SunSmart

Don't let sunburn catch you out

Whether you are at home or abroad, use shade, clothing and at least factor 15 sunscreen to protect your skin from sunburn when the sun is strong.

Spend time in the shade between 11am and 3pm

The summer sun is strongest around the middle of the day. Find shade under umbrellas, trees, canopies or indoors.

Cover up with a t-shirt, hat and sunglasses

When the sun is at its strongest, sunscreen is not enough.

Use at least factor 15 sunscreen

Choose a sunscreen that is at least factor 15 and has a high star rating. Use it generously and regularly to get the right amount of protection. Sunscreen does not give 100% protection and should be used along with shade and clothing. Never use sunscreen as an excuse to stay out in the sun for longer.

Take extra care with children

Young skin is delicate. Keep babies out of the sun, especially around midday.

Avoid sunbeds

Sunbeds are not a safer alternative to tanning in the sun. The intensity of some of the UV rays they give off can be 10-15 times higher than that of the midday sun.

Report unusual moles or skin changes to your doctor

Finding skin cancer early can save lives.

Know your skin type

The fairer your skin, the more careful you need to be in the sun. Knowing your skin type can help you work out when you need to protect yourself.

Experts have identified six different skin types. Colour and tone vary a lot within each skin type, but it is a useful guide. Match your hand colour to the photo. Choose the description that most closely matches your hair and eye colour and what would happen to your skin in strong sun if it were not protected.



Type 1

Often burns, rarely tans. Tends to have freckles, red or fair hair, blue or green eyes.



Type II

Usually burns, sometimes tans. Tends to have light hair, blue or brown eyes.



Type III

Sometimes burns, usually tans. Tends to have brown hair and eyes.



Type IV

Rarely burns, often tans. Tends to have dark brown eyes and hair.



Type V

Naturally brown skin. Often has dark brown eyes and hair.



Type VI

Naturally black-brown skin. Usually has black-brown eyes and hair.

The UV index

The global solar ultraviolet index, or UV index, is a way of describing the strength of the sun's rays at the earth's surface. The higher the value, the greater the risk of sunburn and the less time it takes to damage your skin.

The UV index varies depending on where you are in the world, the time of year, the weather, the time of day and how high up you are compared to sea level. The UV index is not always highest when it is hottest.

On a clear summer's day in the UK, the UV index may reach 7 around midday, but it is rarely higher. Near the equator the UV index is often greater.

Between October and March in the UK, the UV index is normally lower than 3, so even people with fair skin should not need to protect themselves.

You can check UV index forecasts for different parts of the UK at the Met Office website [metoffice.gov.uk](https://www.metoffice.gov.uk)