

Q. What should I do to protect my skin from the sun?

A. If you're going to be in the sun for longer than 15 minutes, you need to protect your skin.

One in five people will develop skin cancer by age 70.¹ But it's largely preventable if you protect your skin from too much sun.

Here's what NOT to do: Take sunscreen pills. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration recently cracked down on companies selling these supplements.²

It's true. Sunscreen lotion or sprays take time to apply. But they're one of your best defenses from the sun's harmful rays. And there isn't a quick fix.

"There's no pill or capsule that can replace your sunscreen," says FDA Commissioner Dr. Scott Gottlieb.

Use sunscreen

When your skin is exposed to the sun it increases your risk for sunburn, skin cancer, and premature skin aging. But sunscreen can protect your skin from the sun's ultraviolet rays.

Read the label

Pick up a bottle of sunscreen, and take a look at the label. You'll see an SPF rating. It stands for Sun Protection Factor. It's a measure of how much ultraviolet light gets to your skin.



The higher SPF rating, the more protection the sunscreen provides to a point:

- **SPF 30** blocks 93 percent of the sun's harmful rays
- **SPF 50** blocks 98 percent of the sun's harmful rays

Sunscreens with an SPF below 30 don't protect your skin enough. And sunscreens with an SPF above 50 don't provide much, if any, added protection.

Be sun smart

Using sunscreen is an effective way to protect your skin from the sun when you're outside. Use it properly and be sun smart by:³

- **Applying sunscreen** 30 minutes before sun exposures.

- **Limiting time in the sun**, especially between the hours of 10 a.m. and 2 p.m., when the sun's rays are the strongest.
- **Wearing clothing to cover** skin exposed to the sun. For example, long-sleeved shirt, pants, sunglasses, and a broad-brimmed hat.
- **Reapplying sunscreen** at least every two hours. More often if you're sweating or in and out of water in a pool, lake, or ocean.

Planning to spend some time in the sun for work, a vacation, or a day at the park? Take a little time to protect your skin from the sun to keep your skin healthy. Use sunscreen. Cover up. Find some shade. And you'll reduce your risk for skin damage caused by too much sun.

References

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2. Gottlieb, S. (2018). New FDA actions to keep consumers safe from the harmful effects of sun exposure. U.S. Food and Drug Administration. From: <https://tinyurl.com/ya6jtbea>
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