

July is UV Safety Month

Spending time outside is a great Maine pastime. We wait a long time for beautiful weather. And being outside is a great way to reduce stress, and get vitamin D. You can work and play outside without raising your skin cancer risk by protecting your skin from the sun

Skin cancer is the most common cancer in the U.S. Most skin cancers are caused by too much exposure to ultraviolet (UV) light. UV rays are an invisible kind of radiation that comes from the sun, tanning beds, and sunlamps. UV rays can damage skin cells.

Protection from UV rays is important all year, not just during the summer. UV rays can reach you on cloudy and cool days, and they reflect off of surfaces like water, cement, sand, and snow. Mid-day is the most dangerous when the sun is at its highest.

How to Protect Your Skin From the Sun

Stay in the shade, especially during midday hours. You can reduce your risk of sun damage and skin cancer by staying in the shade under an umbrella, tree, or other shelter. Your best bet to protect your skin is to use sunscreen or wear protective clothing when you're outside—even when you're in the shade.

Wear light clothes that cover your arms and legs whenever possible. Long-sleeved shirts and long pants and skirts can give some protection from the sun's rays. Clothes made from tightly woven fabric offer the best protection. Some clothing is certified under international standards as offering UV protection.

Wear a wide brim hat to shade your face, head, ears, and neck. A tightly woven fabric, such as canvas, works best to protect your skin from UV rays. Avoid straw hats with holes that let sunlight through. A darker hat may offer more UV protection.

Wear sunglasses that block both UVA and UVB rays. Sunglasses protect your eyes from UV rays and reduce the risk of cataracts. They also protect the tender skin around your eyes from sun exposure. Sunglasses that block both UVA and UVB rays offer the best protection. Most sunglasses sold in the United States, regardless of cost, meet this

standard. Wrap-around sunglasses work best because they block UV rays from sneaking in from the side.

Use sunscreen with sun protection factor (SPF) 15 or higher, for both UVA and UVB protection before you go outside. Reapply frequently throughout the day.. Don't forget to put a thick layer on all exposed skin. Get help for hard-to-reach places like your back. And remember, sunscreen works best when combined with other options.

Sunscreen is not recommended for babies who are 6 months old or younger. The [U.S. Food and Drug Administration](#) recommends keeping infants out of the sun during midday and using protective clothing if they have to be in the sun.

Check the sunscreen's expiration date. Sunscreen without an expiration date has a shelf life of no more than 3 years. Its shelf life is shorter if it has been exposed to high temperatures.

Learn more at [Sun Safety | Skin Cancer | CDC](#)