

Travel Health and Wellbeing



Staying safe in the sun

Exploring some of nature's most beautiful landscapes, visiting history's most significant landmarks or simply wandering the streets of a new city are what travel is all about. While adventures can see you enjoying yourself outside more than you normally would and in turn getting more exercise—it can also mean you're increasing your exposure to the sun (even if it's hiding behind some clouds).

Approximately, two in three Australians will be diagnosed with skin cancer by the time they are 70, making it one of the most common cancers in the country*. Sun damage can occur in as little as 15 minutes of unprotected sun exposure with the risk of sunburn increasing when ultraviolet radiation (UV) is reflected from water (swimming pools or the sea), white sand or snow. So no matter what the temperature, if you're spending time outside it's important to think about your sun safety.

But being sun smart isn't a hard thing to do. To help protect yourself against sun damage and skin cancer we suggest using a combination of these five steps:

1. Wear sunscreen

Incorporating sunscreen application into your morning routine is a great habit to get into. Make sure that your sunscreen is water-resistant and apply liberally to clean, dry skin at least 20 minutes before you go outside. To make the process even more effortless, many moisturisers and makeup brands now also include SPF, so you can opt for one of these options when your time in the sun may be limited. But don't forget if you are spending extended periods in the sun, you need to reapply every two hours.

2. Cover up

Choosing clothing that covers as much skin as possible is one of the practical ways to prevent sun damage. This can however prove difficult in warmer or humid climates. If you're going to be exposed to the sun (and it's hot) try to protect key areas such as your neck and shoulders which can often take the brunt of the sun and ensure you use sunscreen to protect your exposed areas of skin.

3. Don't forget your hat

A broad-brim or bucket style hat can provide good sun protection for the face, nose, neck and ears—some of the most common areas treated for skin cancer. A helpful tip, make sure to choose a hat made with closely woven fabric, because if you can see through it, UV rays will get through it.

4. Protect your eyes

The UV reflected off snow or large bodies of water can be particularly damaging to your eyes. To keep your eye sight safe, wear sunglasses when you're outside and exposed to bright sunlight.

5. Seek shade

When you're exploring, staying out of the sun may not always be possible. But when you can, seeking out shade can be an effective way to reduce your sun exposure. Simply being conscious of your surroundings and opting for shaded spots to stop, rest or eat can help. If you know you will be spending an extended period of time in the sun without any shade – you can always bring an umbrella.

Sun safety is important all year round, when you're travelling and at home. Following our five simple steps is a great way to start protecting yourself from sun damage and in turn reduce your risk of skin cancer.

References

1. <https://www.cancer.org.au/about-cancer/types-of-cancer/skin-cancer.html>
2. <https://www.cancer.org.au/preventing-cancer/reduce-your-risk/be-sunsmart.html>
3. http://healthywa.wa.gov.au/Articles/F_I/How-to-be-SunSmart
4. <https://www.cancer.org/latest-news/stay-sun-safe-this-summer.html>