

preventing skin cancer

how to be SunSmart



...and reduce your risk

Skin cancer facts

Skin cancer is very common in the UK and more people get it each year. Most skin cancers are caused by too much sun. They could be prevented by taking care in strong sunshine and avoiding sunburn.

Who is most at risk?

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

- fair skin that tends to burn in strong sun
- red or fair hair
- lots of moles or freckles
- a personal or family history of skin cancer
- had sunburn, especially when young

As a general rule, the fairer your skin, the more careful you should be in the sun. Knowing your skin type will help you work out when you need to protect yourself.

Know your skin type

Experts identify six different skin types. Colour and tone vary a lot within each skin type, but it is a useful guide. Match your natural hand colour to the photo. Choose the description that most closely matches your hair and eye colour and what happens to your skin in strong sun.



Type I

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

The UV index

The global solar ultraviolet index, or UV index is a measure of the sun's strength. The higher the value, the greater the danger from the sun 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.

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 the UV index is normally lower than 3, so even people with fair skin do not need to protect themselves. You can check today's UV index forecast for different parts of the UK and Europe at the Met Office website www.met-office.gov.uk

When do I need to protect myself?

This table shows how you can use the UV index to work out the burn risk for your skin. The higher your risk, the better protection you will need.

		Skin Type			
		I and II	III and IV	V	VI
UV Index	1 2	low	low	low	low
	3 4	medium	low	low	low
	5	high	medium	low	low
	6	high	medium	medium	low
	7 8 9	very high	high	medium	medium
	10	very high	high	high	medium

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 or seek shade between 11 and 3. Use at least factor 15 sunscreen on exposed skin.

Very high risk: Be sure to cover up or stay in the shade between 11 and 3. And use at least factor 15 sunscreen.

If your skin goes pink or red after time in the sun then you need to take more care.

How to be SunSmart in the summer sun

Those most at risk are people with fair skin, lots of moles or freckles, or a family history of skin cancer. Know your skin type and use the UV Index to find out when you need to protect yourself.

Spend time in the shade between 11 and 3
The summer sun is most damaging to your skin in the middle of the day. Find shade under umbrellas, trees, canopies or indoors.

Make sure you never burn
Sunburn can double your risk of skin cancer.

Aim to cover up with a t-shirt, hat and sunglasses
When the sun is at its peak sunscreen is not enough.

Remember to take extra care with children
Young skin is delicate. Keep babies out of the sun especially around midday.

Then use factor 15+ sunscreen or higher
Apply sunscreen generously and reapply often.

also Report mole changes or unusual skin growths promptly to your doctor.

True or false?

Skin cancer is very common in the UK even though we don't have a hot climate

True. There are now more deaths from skin cancer in the UK than in Australia. With rates set to treble in the next 30 years, it's never been more important to protect our skin from the sun's harmful UV rays.

We all need lots of sun to get enough vitamin D
False. Vitamin D is used to build and maintain strong bones. Our bodies need some sunshine to make this vitamin. But fair-skinned people don't have to spend a lot of time in the sun to make enough vitamin D. It's certainly not necessary for anyone to go red.

It's better to use the UV index than the temperature to work out how likely I am to burn

True. The UV index is a measure of the sun's strength. It is not always highest when it's hottest. The UV index is highest around midday, but the maximum temperature is often later in the afternoon. By knowing your skin type and using the UV index you can work out when you need to protect yourself from the sun.

Sunscreen is all I need to protect myself from the sun

False. No sunscreen blocks out all of the sun's UV rays. So don't rely on sunscreen alone. When the sun is at its peak the best ways to protect yourself are to seek shade or cover up. Sunscreen should not be used to spend longer in the sun.

Further information

Visit Cancer Research UK's SunSmart website www.sunsmart.org.uk

Check the UV index forecast for the UK and Europe at www.met-office.gov.uk and click on 'Solar UV index'.

For more about cancer, visit our patient information website www.cancerhelp.org.uk

If you want to talk in confidence about cancer, call our information nurses. Direct line **020 7061 8355** or freephone **0800 CANCER** that is **0800 226237**.

For information about finding skin cancer early please see our 'Detecting skin cancer' leaflet. Order copies of this and other cancer awareness leaflets online at www.cancerresearchuk.org/leaflets email publications@caner.org.uk or call **020 7061 8333**.

About Cancer Research UK

Cancer Research UK is the leading charity dedicated to research on the causes, treatment and prevention of cancer. If you would like to support our work please call **020 7121 6699** or visit our website.

www.cancerresearchuk.org
www.reducetherisk.org.uk



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