

## Sunscreen Alone Is Not Enough Other protective measures

Though sunscreen offers some protection, it does not block out all ultraviolet rays.<sup>1</sup> For prevention of skin cancer and damage, sunscreen alone is imperfect.<sup>2</sup> Sunscreen needs to be combined with other protective measures, which include:

- Avoid the sun, or seek shade from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. when the sun's rays are strongest. Even on a cloudy day, up to 80 percent of the sun's rays can get through.<sup>3</sup> Practice the "shadow rule" – seek shade when your shadow is shorter than you are tall.
- Wear a wide-brimmed hat (preferably with a 3-inch wide brim) to protect your head and face and protective clothing to cover the rest of your body.<sup>3</sup> Choose a tightly woven canvas hat rather than a straw hat with holes that let sunlight through.<sup>4</sup> If wearing a baseball cap, be sure to protect the neck with sunscreen or a piece of tightly woven fabric draped down the back of the neck. The less light you see through a fabric when held up to the light, the more protective it is. Thus, tightly woven fabrics work best for all areas of the body. The best fabric choices to block out the sun are denim, 100 percent polyester, shiny polyester blends, and satin finish silk.



Weave isn't the only factor, however; darker-colored fabrics actually absorb UV rays and provide better protection than white or light-colored fabrics. Dry clothing provides better protection than wet. Long-sleeved shirts with high collars and long pants or skirts provide maximum coverage to the skin.<sup>1</sup>



You can also purchase fabrics treated specifically for sun protection; see the manufacturer's label for a Ultraviolet Protection Factor (UPF) rating.

The higher the UPF, the higher the protection from the sun's UV rays. The UPF indicates how much of the sun's UV radiation is absorbed by the fabric. For example, UPF 20 indicates the fabric only allows 1/20th of the sun's UV radiation to pass through it, reducing your skin's UV radiation exposure by 20 times where it is protected by the fabric. UPF ratings should range from UPF 16–50+. Fabrics with a UPF of 15 or less should not be labeled as sun-protective. Note that sun-protective clothing may lose its effectiveness if it is too tight, stretched out, damp or wet, or has been washed or worn repeatedly.<sup>5</sup>

- Wear sunglasses with 99–100 percent UV protection to protect your eyes.<sup>3</sup> The UV protection is a chemical treatment placed on the lenses. Do not assume that a darker lens means more UV protection. Any colored lens can have UV protection or not. Check the sunglasses' label to be sure it says 99 percent or 100 percent UV protection. Also, choose sunglasses that fit close to the face and wrap-around frames that help block sunlight from all angles.<sup>1</sup>
- Avoid artificial tanning methods such as sunlamps, tanning beds, [tanning pills](#), and [tanning makeup](#).<sup>4</sup>



- Check your skin regularly for signs of skin cancer.<sup>3</sup>

For more information see: [Safer Sunning in Seven Steps](#) and [The Darker Side of Tanning](#).

**Sources:**

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