Enjoying the Sun Safely

I am sure, like me, you will have been relishing the glorious sunshine and spending more time outdoors. Long may it continue. While it is lovely to be out it is important to be aware of the risks of sun and protect yourself. Remember, a ‘heathly’ tan is a complete misnomer.

The advice from skin care and skin cancer specialists is to use sunscreen throughout the year, even on cloudy days, but it is especially important to be sun aware throughout the summer months and to take extra steps to stay safe.



Here are some tips for the summer:

**Spend time in the shade**, especially when the sun is strongest between 11am and 3pm.

**Cover up** with clothes, a hat and sunglasses.

**Use a sunscreen** with a protection level of at least SPF 30 and 5 stars. Use it generously and reapply it regularly.

**Drink plenty of water.**

**Covering Up**

The more skin that is covered by your clothing the better. Loose, denser woven fabrics are best and darker, brightly coloured fabrics protect you more by absorbing more UV radiation than lighter pastel shades, so less reaches your skin. The protection reduces if your clothes are wet.

UV sun suits are great for giving children added protection when swimming and at the beach – Decathlon sell them for under £10.

Choose a wide brimmed hat or one with a brim and a flap over the neck and ears.

Wear sunglasses to protect your eyes – choose those with 100% UV protection.

**Sunscreen**

Choose a sunscreen that protects from both UVA and UVB rays as they both play a role in skin damage and increasing the risk of skin cancer. UVA are the most prevalent and penetrate the skin more deeply but UVB are more intense and contribute more to sun burn.

Apply sunscreen 20-30 minutes before going outside. Cover exposed areas thoroughly including hands and feet. About 2 teaspoons is enough for head, arms, neck and feet. About 2 tablespoons is enough for the whole body, for example when you are in swim wear.

Reapply every couples of hours or after swimming or excessive sweating and after towelling dry. Even ‘once a day’ and water resistant sunscreen should be reapplied regularly which also helps to you to avoid missing bits of skin.

I would add that sunscreens can lure people into a false sense of security and may encourage some people seeking a tan to spend longer in the sun. They should be thought of as products to protect you while you are in the sun rather than to support ‘safe’ tanning.

I am going to unapologetically recommend my favourite brand, ‘[Altruist](https://www.altruistsun.com/)’, developed by UK skin cancer specialist, Dr Andrew Birnie. He is a consultant dermatologist and skin cancer surgeon who has developed a product that is top quality and cheap because his company doesn’t spend lots of money advertising and doesn’t have high profit margins. His mission: to reduce the incidence of skin cancer by enabling more people to use more sunscreen. There is a wealth of information on their website, including getting enough Vitamin D. Check it out.

More information: [Cancer Reasearch UK](http://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/causes-of-cancer/sun-uv-and-cancer/ways-to-enjoy-the-sun-safely)