

Plan Your Sun Protection

Skin cancer is the most common cancer in the United States. To lower your skin cancer risk, protect your skin from the sun and avoid indoor tanning.

Before you spend time outdoors, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that you plan your sun protection accordingly. Seek shade, especially during midday hours. Cover up with clothing to protect exposed skin. Wear a hat with a wide brim to shade the face, head, ears, and neck. Wear sunglasses that wrap around and block as close to 100% of both UVA and UVB rays as possible.

Use sunscreen with broad spectrum (UVA and UVB) protection and a sun protection factor (SPF) 15 or higher. Remember to reapply sunscreen at least every 2 hours and after swimming, sweating, or toweling off.

The National Council on Skin Cancer prevention shares these facts about skin cancer. Unprotected skin can be damaged by the sun's UV rays in as little as 15 minutes. Yet it can take as long as 12 hours for skin to show the full effect of sun exposure. Plan ahead so that when you're having fun outdoors, you won't forget to protect yourself from the sun.

Even if it's cool and cloudy, you still need protection. UV rays, not the temperature, do the damage.

A change in your skin is the most common sign of skin cancer. This could be a new growth, a sore that doesn't heal, or a change in a mole.