

on your feet:

As summer arrives and the beach beckons it's tempting to forget how damaging the sun's rays can be. **Rachel Davis** provides a timely reminder.

# Safe sun

There's no such thing as a healthy tan. As summer starts hotting up thoughts of holidays abound, but it's important to remember that sun damage can occur just as easily in Britain as in hotter climates. Whether you're nipping out to buy a sandwich or taking a well-deserved break in a local park, keep the following advice in mind.

## What's the damage?

Sunlight contains two types of ultraviolet radiation - UVA and UVB. As a general rule, UVA causes Ageing and UVB causes Burning, however BOTH can cause skin cancer, so it's important that your sunscreen protects against both.

## How to stay safe

Cancer Research UK is advising us all to think S.M.A.R.T about the sun:

- S** Stay in the shade 11am - 3pm
- M** Make sure you never burn
- A** Always cover up
- R** Remember to take extra care with children
- T** Then use factor 15+ sunscreen.

## Stay in the shade 11am - 3pm

The sun's UV rays are strongest at this time of the day. UV rays are also stronger at altitude, so you need to be extra careful if you are skiing or mountain climbing!

## Make sure you never burn

This may sound obvious, but most people burn when they are not sunbathing and may not be thinking about the sun, such as walking in a park or when gardening. Also remember that the sun's heat does not come from its UV rays, so you can burn without feeling the heat.

## Always cover up

Again, this seems obvious, but you may not know that if clothing gets wet, its protection can halve. Also remember to protect your eyes with sunglasses. These need to have one of the following markings:

- ♦ A CE Mark and British Standard (BS EN 1836: 1997)
- ♦ A UV 400 label
- ♦ A statement that the glasses offer 100% UV protection.

Wrap-around styles also offer more protection.

## Remember to take extra care with children

It is especially important to look after children's skin as sunburn during childhood can significantly increase your risk of developing malignant melanoma later in life. Children also tend to spend much more time outside than adults (including often overlooked school break times). Kids can be easily distracted by the pool or playground, so a good way to avoid arguments is to apply the first application 20-30 minutes before going outside then re-apply often.

## Sunscreen

This should be used to help protect against sun damage but NOT to allow you to spend longer in the sun.

A sunscreen's SPF value tells you how well it can filter out UVB rays only, so it is important to get one that also blocks out UVA - labelled 'broad spectrum'. No sunscreen offers 100% protection, but a factor of at least 15 provides over 90% protection from UVB rays.

Use water resistant sunscreens as they are less likely to be washed or sweated off and make sure your cream is within its shelf life.

## How to use sun screen

- Apply 15-30 minutes before going out, then once again when outside
- Rub in lightly onto clean, dry skin. Use plenty
- Reapply every 2 hours, or more often if washed or sweated off
- Apply to all exposed skin - remember ears, lips and tops of feet.

If you follow this advice and stay sun SMART, not only will you avoid the discomfort of burning but you'll also be helping to avoid developing skin cancer in the future. And as an added bonus, you'll keep yourself looking younger for longer!