

How can hats help prevent skin cancer

Many skin cancers occur on the face, neck and ears. A well designed hat can help shield you from the sun's harmful ultraviolet (UV) rays. By wearing an appropriate hat, you can reduce the risk of disfiguring skin cancer. You need the most protection at midday, between 10 am to 3 pm, when UV rays are most severe. Your exposure to UV rays increases 20% when reflected off a pool or lake, and you also can get a bad sunburn on cloudy days.

Why should I worry about skin cancer?

One in seven people in the United States gets skin cancer. Of those cases, one in 100 are melanoma, which can be fatal. One severe, blistering sunburn before the age of 18 doubles your risk, which also increases with age.

Skin Cancer is more common if you are:

- fair or light-skinned
- have a family history of certain moles, or
- spend a lot of time outdoors in the sun, whether for work, sport, or leisure.

Are all skin cancers the same?

No, there are three types:

- Basal cell (75% of all skin cancers)
- Squamous cell (20% of all skin cancers)
- Melanoma (5% of skin cancers that cause 75% of all skin cancer deaths)

The steady increase in the incidence of melanoma suggests that we need to make better use of hats, other clothing, and sunscreen lotions to protect skin from the sun. With early identification and treatment, survival rates increase. Ninety-nine percent of basal cell and squamous cell cancers are curable. The five year survival rate for melanoma, if found early is approximately 85%.

Monitor your moles.

Most moles are harmless, but learn your ABCD's to be alert for melanoma, the most serious skin cancer. Melanoma might be suspected when a mole has:

- A- **Asymmetry:** One half does not match the other.
- B- **Border irregularity:** The outside edges are ragged, notched, or blurred.
- C- **Color variation:** The skin pigment is not uniform, but shades of tan, brown, black or red, white and blue.
- D- **Diameter** greater than 6 millimeters (about 1/4 inch) with any sudden or continuing to increase in size.

Make it a habit to...

- Examine your skin carefully, front and back in a mirror every 6-8 weeks. Take note of any changes in your skin.
- Watch for sores that won't heal, red patches, and changes in size or color of moles. These may be warning signs of skin cancer.
- Consult your doctor for regular checkups and any time you are in doubt.
- Use suntan lotion with a sun protection factor (SPF) rating of at least 15.
- Wear a hat and other clothing to shelter yourself from the sun.

No endorsement of products or firms is intended, nor is criticism implied of those not mentioned. These suggestions are intended to alert the general public to sun safety, however, following these precautions cannot guarantee protection from the sun or skin cancer.



Is it time to change your hat?



Hat styles differ in their ability to shade our face and protect you from the sun. As we better understand the relationship between sun exposure and skin cancer, hat design takes on a new importance.

How to select a sun-safe hat...

Hats that shade the neck, ears and face are widely available in stores. One hat design may not have all the features listed, and some features are mutually exclusive, or some features may be more important to you than others. If you wear a baseball-style cap most of the time now, it may be time to change your hat. By selecting an appropriate hat and wearing it regularly while in the sun, you can help reduce your risk of skin cancer.

Fabric

Some materials let more air through than others. A closely woven canvas or other material needs air vents/eyelets to make the hat cooler to wear in heat. Sea-grass or straw hats may not need vents because of their open weave, but they may not screen as well. Sunlight can penetrate many lightweight or open-weave materials.

Style

Hats vary in the shape and width of the brim. Narrower brims offer less shade and protection. As you think about hat styles, it is important to think about your work and activities.

Work with pesticides requires special headgear that is not discussed here; many hats that are sun-protective in most circumstances will not protect you from pesticide exposure.

Size

Hat styles are available in set sizes, adjustable fit sizes, or "one-size-fits-all". Baseball caps shade the eyes and size can be adjusted easily, but they do not shade the neck, ears, and face. Some hat styles are contracted with an inside elastic band to fit a greater number of individuals comfortably.

Key Design Features

As you consider a new hat, ask yourself these questions:

Does the hat have...

- a wide brim (3 inches or more)?
- a design that does not interfere with side vision?
- vents in the crown for air flow?
- an inside sweat band that's comfortable?
- a secure fit to stay on your head?
- a chin strap?
- and extended flap to cover your neck?

Is the hat made with a...

- material that will block UV-a and UV-b rays?
- light in color to reflect light?
- dark lining under the brim to reduce eyestrain?
- crushable, resilient material?

Is the hat style...

- practical for your work or other activities?
- lightweight comfortable to wear?
- priced reasonably?

Alternative hat styles



Backflap:

a size-adjustable cap with an attached flap shields neck and ears.



Booney:

This lightweight fabric hat has a dark lining under the brim to reduce eye strain.

Sun Crusher:

Eyelets allow air flow; front brim is wider than back brim.



Outback:

This canvas hat has a wide brim and chin strap.

Tropical Straw:

Open weave is cool and has some sun protection.



Common hat measurements

(measure around your head)

if your head measures...	your hat size is...	and is considered
21 ^{1/2} - 21 ^{7/8} "	6 ^{3/4} - 7	Small
22 ^{1/4} - 22 ^{5/8} "	7 ^{1/8} - 7 ^{1/4}	Medium
23 - 23 ^{1/2} "	7 ^{3/8} - 7 ^{1/2}	Large
23 ^{7/8} - 24 ^{1/4} "	7 ^{5/8} - 7 ^{3/4}	Extra-Large