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How Can I Protect My Skin From The Sun?

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A weekly question/answer column

How Can I Protect My Skin From The Sun?

Louise Young answers:*

The sun feels good after a long, cold winter. Yet too much exposure can dry the skin and cause skin-related tumors and other problems. It is the culprit for 90 percent of all cases of skin cancer, the third most common cancer for women. Here are recommendations to keep your skin protected.

- Sun protectants include anything that blocks the sun from the skin, including hats, clothing and sunscreens.
- All colors of skin need sun protection. Remember to cover ears, top of head, feet and all areas that will be exposed to sun rays. Young, tender or unexposed skin will be more susceptible to burning from sun rays. Old, tough, and exposed skin will be less susceptible to burning, but will be more likely to dry, develop age spots and become leathery.
- Clouds are not protection from the sun's rays. They often fool us into thinking the sun is less hot or damaging. Protect skin on cloudy days just as you would in full sun.
- Sun protection factor (SPF) must be rated at least 15 or higher to adequately protect the skin from damaging ultraviolet rays. For adequate protection, select a sunscreen that also blocks both the UVA and UVB forms of light--referred to as full-spectrum sunscreens.
- Sunscreen with moisturizer will simplify sun protection. Moisturizer is an essential protection from drying skin. It will not replace lost moisture in the skin, but it will protect skin from losing additional moisture. Remember also to moisturize and protect your lips from the sun.

* Louise Young is Utah State University Extension Clothing Specialist