

# Reducing your risk of skin cancer

## Sun-safe hats

### Key point

- A sun-safe hat protects the whole face, head, back of neck and ears.
- A hat can reduce the amount of ultraviolet (UV) radiation reaching the eyes by 50%.
- Broad-brimmed, bucket and legionnaire-style hats provide good protection.
- When choosing a hat for children, ensure that it fits correctly, and shorten the cord to reduce the risk of it catching during play or on equipment.

Our faces are exposed to ultraviolet (UV) radiation every day of the year. So it's not surprising that areas such as the ears, temple, lips and nose are among the most common sites for skin cancer to develop.

The right hat not only protects your face, head, ears and the back of the neck but can reduce the amount of UV radiation reaching your eyes by 50%.

### Choosing the right hat

A sun-safe hat will:

- Have a broad brim to adequately shade the whole face
- Be made of a close-weave fabric to ensure no light gets through
- Have a dark lining to reduce the amount of UV radiation being reflected on the face and eyes
- Not obscure vision or pose a safety concern (i.e. cords or toggles that can get caught on children's play equipment)
- Have good ventilation, especially if the hat is to be used while exercising.

### Types of sun-safe hats:

- **Broad-brimmed hat:** Brims should be at least 7.5cm for an adult and 6cm for children. For children under the age of 10 years, the brim should be proportional to the size of the child's head and provide shade for the whole face.

- **Bucket hat:** Bucket or surfer-style hats should have a deep crown and sit low on the head. The angled brim should be at least 6cm for adults and 5cm for children, and should shade the face, ears and back of the neck.
- **Legionnaire-style hat:** Legionnaire-style hats should have a flap that covers the neck. The side flap and front peak (brim) should meet to protect the sides of the face.

Baseball caps and sun visors do not protect the cheeks, ears and back of the neck and are not recommended.

### Ultraviolet Protection Factor (UPF)

Hats may be labelled with an Ultraviolet Protection Factor or UPF. The UPF is a scale developed to rate how much UV protection a fabric provides. A fabric with a UPF of 50 allows only one-fiftieth (or 2%) of UV radiation to pass through it and so offers excellent protection.

### Hats for children and babies

Cancer Council recommends that sun-safe hats be a compulsory part of a child's school uniform. The type of hat may depend on current school uniform policy, age of the children and/or activity. For example, broad-brimmed hats may be most appropriate for general daywear, and legionnaire-style hats may be more suitable for structured physical activity.

Cancer Council does not recommend that children wear a cap at school, even if it is available as part of the school uniform. A cap does not provide protection for a child's neck, cheeks or ears.

Hats designed for babies should be lightweight and should crumple easily when the infants put their heads down.

Always check that chin straps or cords and toggles have a safety snap or a safety release clip to ensure that, in the case of the hat becoming caught on play equipment or other object, it comes easily away and does not pose a choking hazard to the child. Other options are to remove any straps entirely, or look for hats that can be adjusted at the crown.

Cancer Council NSW recommends that when the **UV Index** is 3 or above, you should protect your skin in five ways:

- Slip on clothing that covers your arms and legs
- Slap on 30+, broad-spectrum sunscreen
- Slap on a broad-brimmed, bucket or legionnaire hat
- Seek shade
- Slide on wrap-around sunglasses.

For more information on skin cancer prevention and sun protection, visit our website

[www.cancerCouncil.com.au/sunsmart](http://www.cancerCouncil.com.au/sunsmart).