

**CARDIFF AND VALE UHB  
DEPARTMENT OF DERMATOLOGY**

**ADVICE ABOUT PROTECTING YOUR SKIN  
FROM THE HARMFUL RAYS OF THE SUN**

Some advice about protecting your skin from the harmful rays of the sun.

1. Damage to your skin from the sun is caused by ultraviolet light [UVL]. The sun's rays are strongest between 11am and 3 pm - when half of the total UVL reaches us. Plan outdoor activities for early morning or late afternoon.
2. Apply a good strong sunscreen (SPF 30 or higher), which protects against UVB light and a maximum/ 4 or 5 star rating (\*\*\*\*\*), which protects against UVA light. The sunscreen should be re-applied frequently [2 hourly], especially after swimming or perspiring heavily. Make sure that you apply the sunscreen carefully. Pay particular attention to the lips, nose, ears and eyelids and to the top of the head if the hair is thinning. Remember the backs of the hands, the feet, the backs of the thighs and the shoulders.
3. Apply a sunscreen on overcast days in the summer. 90% of the UVL can penetrate through hazy cloud.
4. Clothing is the best sunscreen. Wear long trousers, long sleeve tops and wide brimmed hats whilst outdoors on sunny days between 11am and 3 pm.
5. UV light can damage eyes. Always wear sunglasses which conform to British Safety Standards [BSI]. There should be a BSI label on them.
6. Be aware of reflective surfaces. Less than half of UVL comes from direct sunshine. Fresh snow reflects 80% of sun burning UVL and sand reflects 25% of UVL. Water reflects only 5% of UVL. Remember that 40% of UVL can penetrate water to a depth of 50 cm [20"] so you can get sunburnt whilst swimming. Wear a T-shirt or wet-suit while swimming.
7. Use a sunscreen during a high altitude activity such as mountain climbing and skiing. There is less atmosphere to absorb the sun's rays, increasing the risk of burning. Every 300 metres higher you go, the UVL increases by 4%. Remember that the closer you are to the Equator, the stronger are the sun's rays.
8. It is especially important to take care if visiting Mediterranean or tropical climates where the sun is much stronger. However, many people who never leave South Wales also suffer from the results of excess sun exposure. The sunburn time on a hot summer's day may be as short as 20 minutes.

**For further information about skin diseases we suggest you visit the University Hospital of Wales, Department of Dermatology website at:**

[British Association of Dermatologists - Patient Information Leaflets \(PILs\)  
\(bad.org.uk\)](http://bad.org.uk)

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