

Sun protection at the snow



Winter sports enthusiasts are at an increased risk for overexposure to the sun's ultraviolet (UV) radiation. The combination of high altitudes and UV rays reflected by the snow puts skiers and snowboarders at an increased risk of skin and eye damage, and ultimately skin cancer. Cancer Council Victoria recommends five steps to protect against sun damage at the snow.

1. Slip on sun-protective clothing

Cover your skin by wearing tops with long sleeves and high necks or collars.

2. Slop on SPF30+ broad spectrum, water-resistant sunscreen

Apply a generous amount to all exposed areas of skin 20 minutes before going outside and re-apply every two hours. Remember that snow reflects UV radiation, so make sure you apply sunscreen under your chin, beneath the tip of your nose and behind your ears. It's a good idea to carry a small tube of sunscreen and lip balm in your jacket pocket.

3. Slap on a winter hat

Select a hat that protects your face, head, neck and ears, such as a balaclava, hood or a beanie with flaps to cover your ears.

4. Seek shade

UV levels are most intense during the middle of the day so this is a good time to take a break from the slopes.

5. Slide on goggles or wrap-around sunglasses

Make sure your eye protection meets Australian Standard AS1067. If you wear prescription glasses, talk to your optometrist about getting prescription lenses fitted in your sunglasses.

Why is UV a risk at the snow?

UV radiation is up to 10% higher in Victoria's alpine regions than at sea level because higher altitude means less atmosphere to absorb harmful UV rays.¹

In addition to this, on a sunny day snow can reflect up to 90% of UV radiation.^{2,3} This means that you can be exposed to almost a double dose of UV – direct from the sun and reflected off snow covered surfaces.

If skiing in spring, conditions start to warm up, so you may have more skin exposed. Along with higher UV radiation levels, this may put you at a higher risk of skin damage and sunburn. Make sure you apply sunscreen liberally to all exposed areas, wear tops with long sleeves and a high neck or collar and hats that cover your head and ears.



SunSmart UV Alert

Check the SunSmart UV Alert each day before hitting the slopes for the times of day it is most important to use sun protection. You can find it at bom.gov.au/weather/uv or sunsmart.com.au or on the free SunSmart app.

Visit sunsmart.com.au or contact the Cancer Council Helpline on 13 11 20 for further information and resources.

References

- 1 Liley JB, McKenzie RL. Where on earth has the highest UV? *UV Radiation and its Effects: an Update*. Dunedin, NZ: NIWA, 2006.
- 2 Sliney DH. Physical Factors in Cataractogenesis: Ambient Ultraviolet Radiation and Temperature. *Investigative Ophthalmology & Visual Science* 1986; 27: 781–90.
- 3 Vecchia P, Hietanen M, Stuck BE, van Deventer E, Niu S. *Protecting workers from ultraviolet radiation*. Oberscheisheim: International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection 2007.

This information is based on current available evidence at the time of review. It can be photocopied for distribution.

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