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Sun protective hats

Skin cancer occurs when skin cells are damaged, most commonly by overexposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun. Skin cancers can appear anywhere on the body but often develop where the skin has had most exposure to the sun, such as on the head, face and neck.

To protect skin and eyes from damage caused by UV radiation, wear a hat that protects the face, back of the neck, eyes and ears.

Broad brimmed, bucket or legionnaire hats offer the best protection from UV radiation. Baseball or peaked caps and sun visors are not recommended, as these styles do not protect the ears, cheeks or neck.

For best protection during the daily sun protection times (when the UV level is 3 and above), use all five SunSmart measures:

- Slip on clothing.
- Slop on SPF30 (or higher) broad spectrum, water resistant sunscreen.
- Slap on a hat.
- Seek shade.
- Slide on sunglasses.

The free SunSmart app tells you the sun protection times for your location and provides current UV levels. Sun protection times can also be found at myuv.com.au, bom.gov.au and live UV levels are also available from arpansa.gov.au/uvindex.

Which type of hat?

Wear a hat that provides good shade to the face, back of the neck, eyes and ears. A broad brimmed hat can also reduce UV radiation to the eyes by 50 per cent.¹

Choose a well-fitting hat that is practical and comfortable to wear. Baseball or peaked caps and sun visors are not recommended.

Broad brimmed hat

Brimms should be wide enough to shade the face, neck and ears.



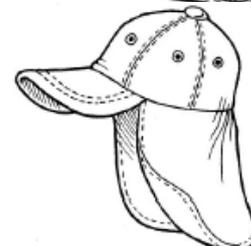
Bucket hat

Bucket hats should have a deep crown and sit low on the head. The angled brim should provide shade to the face, neck and ears.



Legionnaire hat

Legionnaire hats should have a flap that covers the ears and back of the neck to the collarbone/ shoulder. The side flap and front peak should overlap to protect the side of the face.



Recommended brim width measurements³

| | Indicative age group | Headwear size | Broad brimmed Minimum brim width | Bucket style Minimum brim width |
|----------|----------------------|---------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Children | Infants 0–1 year | 41–43 cm | 5 cm | 5 cm |
| | Toddler 1–2 years | 49–52 cm | 5 cm | 5 cm |
| | 3–8 years | 50–54 cm | 5 cm | 5 cm |
| | 8–12 years | 55–57 cm | 6 cm | 6 cm |
| Adults* | S/M | 55–57 cm | 7.5 cm | 6 cm |
| | M/L | 57–59 cm | 7.5 cm | 6 cm |
| | L/XL | 59–61 cm | 7.5 cm | 6 cm |
| | XXL | 62–63 cm | 7.5 cm | 6 cm |

*Greater than 56 cm head circumference



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When choosing a hat, look at:

- the quality of sun protection it offers
- whether it is practical (i.e. easy to keep on and doesn't interfere with activities)
- safety
- ventilation (especially if the hat is to be used during physical activity or in warmer weather)

UPF

The ultraviolet protection factor (UPF) rating refers to both the design of the hat and the material it is made from.

To claim or display a UPF rating, hats are required to provide good sun protection such as a bucket, broad brimmed or legionnaire hat (that meets Australian Standard 4399:2017). Alternative hat designs providing protection and shading at the crown, face, ears and neck are also acceptable.³

Caps and sun visors cannot claim or display a UPF rating.

The UPF rating also provides information on how much UV will pass through un-stretched, dry material. For example, material with a UPF rating of 20 would only allow 1/20th (5 per cent) of UV falling on its surface to pass through it, blocking 95 per cent of UV. Any fabric rated above UPF15 provides at least minimum protection against UV, but UPF50+ is recommended.

Considerations for babies and toddlers

When choosing a hat for young children, consider the size and comfort, the amount of shade it provides and if it will obstruct vision or hearing.

Many babies and toddlers do not like to wear hats. Persistence is needed to teach them that a hat is part of their outside routine. It is also helpful for adults to role model sun protective behaviours.

For babies, choose a design such as a soft bucket hat that will crumple easily when they put their head down.

Hats that can be adjusted at the crown or can be tied at the front to help secure it on a child's head are best. If the hat is secured with a long strap and toggle, ensure it has a safety snap, place the strap at the back of their head or trim the length so it doesn't become a choking hazard.

Hat accessories

Sun protection accessories, such as broad brim attachments or legionnaire-style covers, are available for workers who are required to use a helmet or hard hat.

There are also attachments for cyclists that provide protection while wearing a helmet.

More information and resources

Visit www.sunsmart.org.au, or contact Cancer Council SA on 13 11 20.

UV-protective clothing and accessories can be purchased at Cancer Council SA's shop, or online at www.cancercouncilshop.org.au.

References

1 Rosenthal FS, West SK, Muñoz B, Emmett EA, Strickland PT, Taylor HR. Ocular and facial skin exposure to ultraviolet radiation in sunlight: a personal exposure model with application to a worker population. *Health Physics* 1991;61(1):77–86.

2 Gies P, Javorniczky J, Roy C, Henderson S, Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency. Measurements of the UVR protection provided by hats used at school. *Photochemistry & Photobiology* 2006;82:750–4.

3 Standards Australia/Standards New Zealand. Australian/New Zealand Standard AS/NZS 4399 Sun protective clothing – Evaluation and classification Standards Australia/Standards New Zealand, 2017.

Acknowledgement to Cancer Council Victoria for the original development of this resource. This fact sheet can be photocopied for distribution.

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