



Winter Sun Safety

Sun safety is as important for winter activities as it is for summer activities. The sun's ultraviolet (UV) rays are present all year round, even on cold or cloudy days. Snow increases the impact of the sun's rays by reflecting up to 80% of the UV rays that cause sunburn and eye damage.

The risk of overexposure is greater at higher elevations because you are physically closer to the sun and there is less atmosphere to block the sun's rays. Activities like skiing, snowboarding, snowshoeing, or just playing in the snow require sun protection.

Most of children's skin is covered by clothing in cold weather. However, you should apply sunscreen to exposed skin to prevent sunburn. Choose a "broad-spectrum" sunscreen product labeled SPF 30 or higher. Apply sunscreen about 20 minutes before exposure. Most sunscreen protection lasts about 2 hours, so it should be reapplied as needed.

Sunglasses are also important in winter. The UV rays are so powerful that just an hour of unprotected exposure can sunburn the surfaces of the eyes. This sunburn, called "snow blindness," can cause excessive tearing, redness, swollen eyelids, pain when looking at light, headache, a gritty sensation, and blurred vision. Symptoms can last about a week.

UV damage to the eyes can also cause cataract formation and retina problems later in life.

The best way to protect your sight is to wear sunglasses labeled "100% UV protection." Ski goggles or wrap-around sunglasses offer even more protection.

Practice sun safety, every day, all year long.