



# FOR EVERYONE UNDER THE SUN



Enjoy the sun safely.  
Be SunSmart!

# Skin Cancer

Skin cancer\* is the most common cancer in Ireland and in pale/light skinned populations worldwide, for whom sunburn is a risk factor. The vast majority of these cancers are associated with overexposure to ultraviolet radiation (UV), mainly from sunlight. However, UV from artificial sources e.g. sunbeds, also causes skin cancer.

The good news is that most skin cancers can be prevented (or fully cured if diagnosed early enough). A person's risk is mainly influenced by exposure to UV, and skin pigmentation/natural skin colour.

## Know your skin type! The effects of sunlight are not the same for everyone

A person's natural skin colour influences their sensitivity to UV and skin cancer risk, and can be broadly classified on a scale – the Fitzpatrick Skin Type Scale, which ranges from 1 (high risk) to 6 (low risk). It considers skin colour (lightest to darkest), and how the skin reacts to sunlight (whether it burns easily, or tans).

### THE FITZPATRICK SKIN TYPE CLASSIFICATION



Most people living in Ireland have pale/light skin – Fitzpatrick skin type 1 or 2. People with these skin types burn easily and tan poorly so are particularly vulnerable to UV damage and, as a result, are at a higher risk of skin cancer.

## Reduce your risk: protect & inspect your skin

You can reduce your risk of skin cancer by avoiding overexposure to UV from sunlight or artificial sources (never ever use a sunbed).

Although there is a lower incidence of skin cancer in individuals with dark skin or skin which darkens easily when exposed to sunlight and rarely if ever burns, those that occur are often detected later at a more advanced/dangerous stage. **If you are concerned about a change or growth on your skin, you should always see your doctor.**

## What is solar UV?

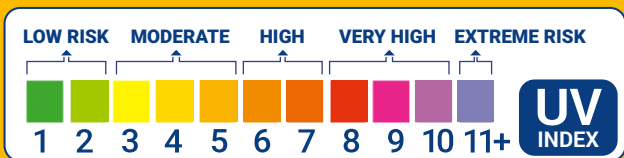
UV is one of the three major components of sunlight, which include visible light and infrared (heat). The two types of UV that are of most concern when it comes to skin health are UVA and UVB.

Overexposure to UV can cause sunburn, skin and eye damage, premature skin ageing and skin cancer.

UV rays are present all year round but levels vary, depending on things like: your location, time of year, time of day and weather conditions.

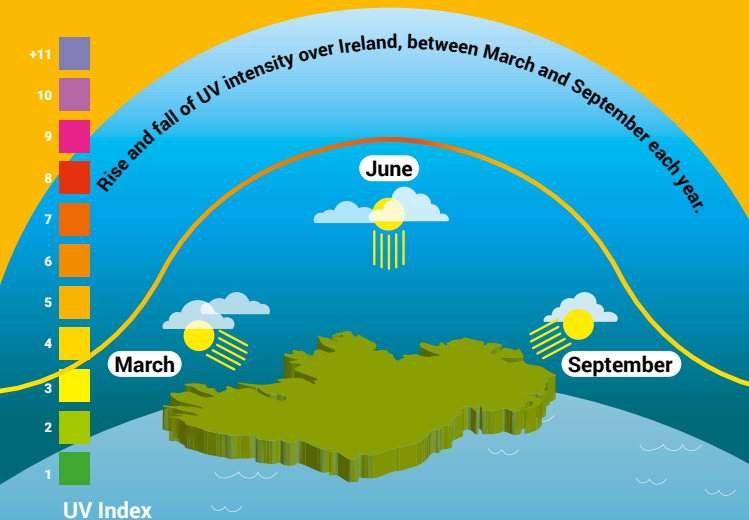
## Confused about the UV index?

The UV index measures the UV level at the surface of the Earth. It ranges from 0 -11+; the higher the number, the greater the risk of sunburn, which is mainly caused by UVB.



UV cannot be seen or felt so we need to defend ourselves against overexposure. For example, getting 'wind burn' on a hazy day is really sunburn! UV damage adds up over a lifetime!

In Ireland, make sun protection part of your daily routine particularly from April - September, when the intensity of sunburn producing UV is greatest.



# Protect your skin

## Be SunSmart:

Make sun protection part of your daily routine **especially** from **April - September**, even when it is cloudy! Stay safe by limiting time in the midday sun when UV is strongest, typically between the hours of **11am-3pm**.

## Remember the five 'Ss' of sun safety:



**Seek** shade e.g. sit in cover of trees to avoid direct sunlight and use a sunshade on your buggy or pram.



**Slip** on clothing: Cover skin as much as possible e.g. wear long sleeves, collared t-shirts, clothes made from close-woven material that does not allow sunlight through.



**Slap** on a hat with a wide brim: Protect your face, ears and neck.



**Slop** on broad-spectrum (UVA/UVB) sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 30+ for adults and 50+ for children, with high UVA protection, and water resistant. Reapply regularly.



**Slide** on sunglasses with UV protection: Guard your eyes from harm.



**Protect your family:**  
Babies and young children are particularly vulnerable to the harmful effects of overexposure to the sun.



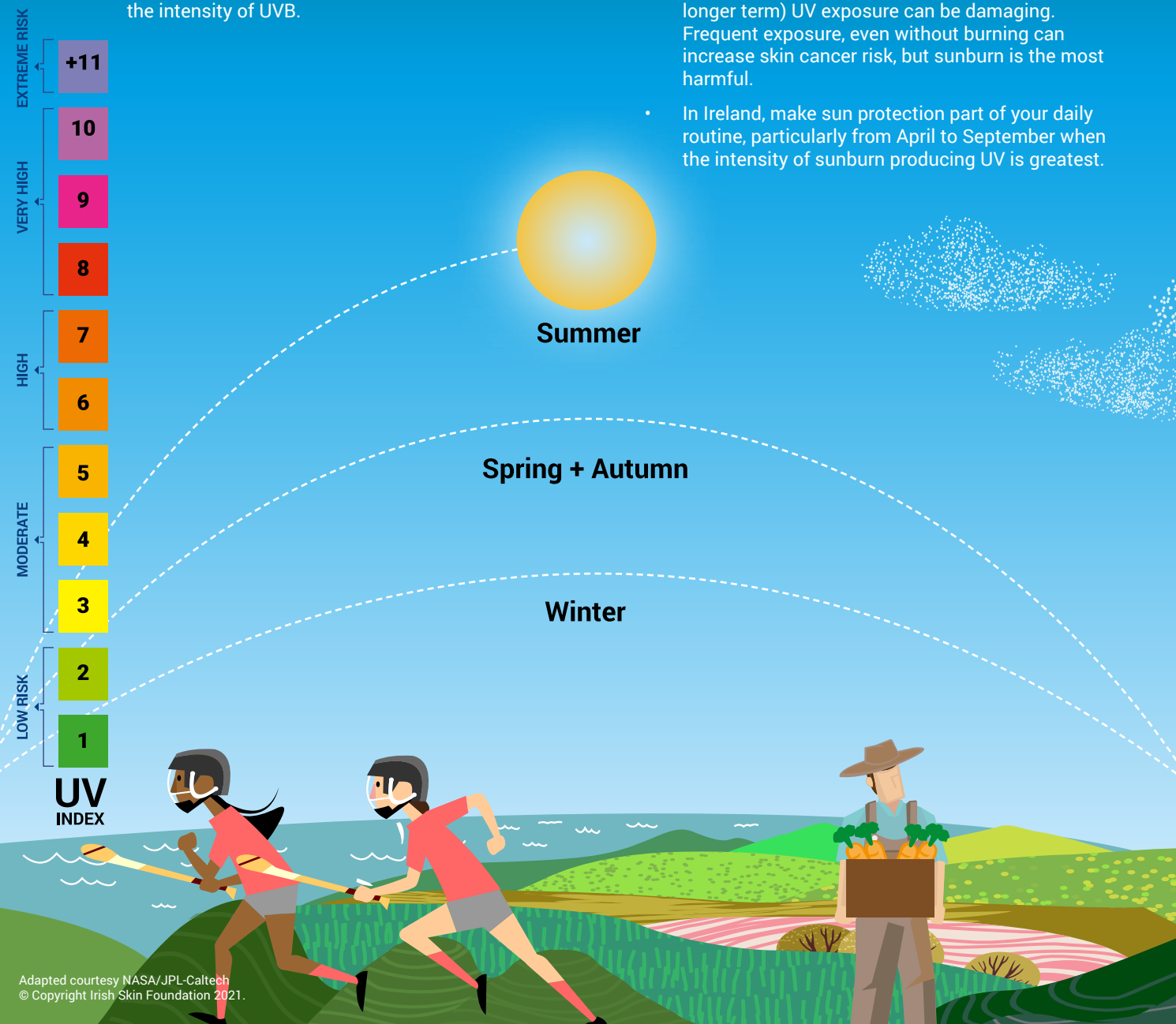
**Remember:**  
Do not deliberately suntan.  
Avoid sunbathing/sunburning.  
Never ever use a sunbed!



## Seasonal UV changes

- The time of year, time of day and time unprotected outside, all matter to your skin!
- The strength of UVA rays remain relatively consistent during the day, all year round, but UVB fluctuates: the higher the sun in the sky, the greater the intensity of UVB.

- UVA is mostly involved in skin ageing while UVB is mainly responsible for sunburn. However, both types of UV are linked to the development of skin cancer.
- Both occasional and chronic (recurring over the longer term) UV exposure can be damaging. Frequent exposure, even without burning can increase skin cancer risk, but sunburn is the most harmful.
- In Ireland, make sun protection part of your daily routine, particularly from April to September when the intensity of sunburn producing UV is greatest.



# Most people don't apply sunscreen correctly. Here's how it's done:

**Correct amount:** You should apply at least one teaspoon to each body part.



- Head/face/neck
- Each arm
- Each leg
- Your front
- Your back

**Correct locations:** Don't forget your ears, your nose, your lips (choose a broad-spectrum lip balm), your neck, the tops of your feet and if your hair is thinning, your scalp!

**Correct timing:** Apply sunscreen at least 20-30 minutes before you go out in the sun.

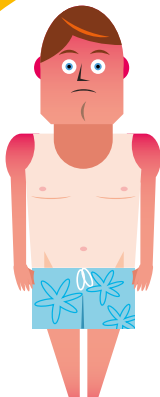
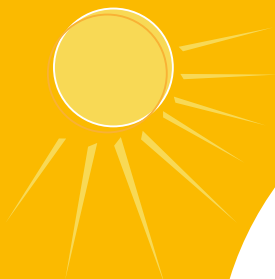
**Correct frequency:** Reapply frequently, at least every two hours and after exercising, sweating, swimming, or towel drying.

**Correct use:** No sunscreen can provide 100% UV protection. Broad-spectrum sunscreen should be used alongside other protective measures such as clothing and shade.

**Know your medications:** Some medicines can increase sensitivity to sunlight.

**Home or abroad:** Whether working, relaxing or playing outside, on holiday either at home or abroad, remember to enjoy the sun safely. Be SunSmart!

**Avoid Sunburn!**



\* Skin cancer is the abnormal, uncontrolled growth of skin cells. Skin cancers are generally divided into two main types: melanoma and non-melanoma skin cancer. Non melanoma skin cancer includes basal cell carcinoma and squamous cell carcinoma.

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This leaflet has been prepared by the Irish Skin Foundation (ISF) in consultation with people affected by skin cancer, dermatology nurses and consultant dermatologists.

The prevention of skin cancer caused by natural and artificial UV is the particular emphasis of the ISF's work in the area of skin cancer.

[www.irishskin.ie](http://www.irishskin.ie)

