

# Summer Smart: Stay Safe in the Sun with UV Protection and Proper Hydration

As the summer sun beckons us outdoors, it's important to enjoy the season safely. Whether you're hitting the beach, exploring the trails, or just relaxing in the backyard, two key health risks deserve your attention: **UV radiation** and **dehydration**. Both can sneak up quickly and have serious consequences. Thankfully, a few simple precautions can keep you safe, healthy, and energized all summer long.

## UV Safety: Protect Your Skin and Eyes

Ultraviolet (UV) rays from the sun can damage your skin in as little as 15 minutes. Prolonged or unprotected exposure increases your risk of sunburn, premature aging, eye damage, and skin cancer—the most common cancer in the United States.

### Top Tips for UV Safety:

#### 1. Apply (and Reapply) Sunscreen

- Use broad-spectrum sunscreen with **SPF 30 or higher**.
- Apply 15 minutes before going outside—even on cloudy days.
- Reapply every **2 hours** or after swimming, sweating, or toweling off.

#### 2. Cover Up

- Wear lightweight, long-sleeved shirts, pants, and **wide-brimmed hats**.
- Choose **UV-protective clothing** when possible (look for UPF labels).

#### 3. Wear Sunglasses

- Protect your eyes with sunglasses that block **100% of UVA and UVB rays**.
- This reduces your risk of cataracts and other sun-related eye damage.

#### 4. Seek Shade

- Avoid direct sun between **10 a.m. and 4 p.m.**, when UV rays are strongest.
- Use umbrellas, canopies, or trees for shade when outdoors.

#### 5. Know Your UV Index

- Check the **UV Index** in your weather forecast to assess daily risk levels.
- Take extra precautions when the index is **6 or higher**.

## Hydration: Fuel Your Body, Beat the Heat

In hot weather, your body loses more water through sweat, increasing your risk of dehydration. Even mild dehydration can cause fatigue, dizziness, and headaches. Severe dehydration can be dangerous, especially for children, older adults, and people with chronic health conditions.

### How to Stay Hydrated:

#### 1. Drink Water Regularly

- Don't wait until you're thirsty—by then, you may already be dehydrated.
- Aim for **8–10 cups** of water a day, and more when active or in the heat.

#### 2. Avoid Dehydrating Drinks

- Limit alcohol, caffeine, and sugary beverages, which can worsen dehydration.
- Sports drinks can help replace electrolytes during intense heat or exercise—but use in moderation.

#### 3. Eat Water-Rich Foods

- Snack on hydrating fruits and veggies like **watermelon, cucumbers, oranges, and strawberries**.
- These not only hydrate but also provide essential nutrients.

#### 4. Dress for the Weather

- Wear **light-colored, loose-fitting clothing** to help your body stay cool and sweat efficiently.

#### 5. Know the Signs of Dehydration

- Early signs: dry mouth, headache, fatigue, dizziness, dark urine.
- Severe symptoms: rapid heartbeat, confusion, fainting—seek medical help immediately.

## Double Up for Summer Wellness

UV protection and hydration go hand in hand for summer health. When you're outdoors:

- **Keep a water bottle** nearby and sip frequently.
- **Reapply sunscreen** throughout the day.
- **Take breaks in the shade**, especially during peak sun hours.

Protecting your skin and staying hydrated doesn't take a lot of effort, but it can make all the difference in how you feel and how you enjoy your summer.

Summer is a time to get outside, soak up the sunshine, and enjoy nature. Just remember—**safety comes first**. By taking simple precautions to guard against UV exposure and dehydration, you can protect your long-term health while making the most of everything summer has to offer.

Stay safe. Stay cool. Stay hydrated.