
Sun protection in the snow

Summary

- UV radiation is more intense in alpine regions than at sea level.
 - Cover up with clothing and a hat, and apply broad-spectrum SPF 30+ lip balm to your lips and broad-spectrum SPF 30+ sunscreen to all exposed areas of skin.
 - Wear sunglasses or goggles that meet Australian Standard AS/NZS 1067 to protect your eyes from the damaging effects of UV radiation.
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Most Australians are aware of the dangers of ultraviolet (UV) radiation during summer. Winter activities such as snow skiing or snowboarding also pose a high risk of sunburn and skin damage. More UV radiation reaches the earth's surface in alpine regions than at sea level because the atmosphere is thinner at the higher altitude.

Snow is highly reflective of UV radiation. In fact, fresh snow reflects even more UV radiation than water. This means exposed skin is at risk of sunburn and skin damage – even on cold and cloudy days. Always cover up with clothing, eye protection and sunscreen.

Wear protective clothing and hats in the snow. Suggestions include:

- A balaclava or beanie that covers your ears will keep your head warm and reduce UV exposure.
- Scarves and jackets with high collars do a great job at keeping you warm and dry, but also protect your skin from harmful UV rays.

Apply sunscreen for sun protection in the snow

Suggestions include:

- All exposed areas of skin should be covered in SPF30 or higher broad-spectrum, water-resistant sunscreen (broad-spectrum means it protects against UVA and UVB rays).
- Apply sunscreen about 20 minutes before going outside (this allows time for it to be absorbed by your skin).
- Put some sunscreen in your jacket pocket and reapply every two hours even if the stated level of protection on the label is four hours.
- Never use sunscreen as the only form of sun protection, as it does not offer complete protection.
- Apply SPF 30 or higher, broad-spectrum, water-resistant lip balm or zinc cream to protect your lips.

Seek shade from the sun in the snow

Wherever practical, consider taking indoor rest breaks, especially through the middle of the day when UV levels are high.

Check the daily sun protection times on the free [SunSmart](#) app for smartphones and tablets. The sun protection times are an indication of when the UV Index (UV radiation intensity) is forecast to be 3 or higher. There is also a free SunSmart widget available on the [SunSmart](#) website.

The sun protection times can also be found on the Australian Government [Bureau of Meteorology](#) website.

Protect your eyes from snow blindness

Snow blindness (photokeratitis) is sun damage to the cornea of the eye. It is a real risk at the snow. The condition is usually temporary and may last only a few days, but it can be very painful. UV exposure may contribute to other eye conditions including cataracts (clouding of the lens of the eye), pterygium (growth of a membrane across the

eye) and age-related macular degeneration (AMD).

Suggestions to protect your eyes include:

- Always wear wrap-around sunglasses or goggles. Aim for a snug fit, so that UV can't get through the top or sides of your eyewear.
- Choose eyewear that meets Australian Standard AS/NZS 1067. This means the lenses will block 95 per cent of UV radiation.
- Sunglasses and goggles can be fitted with prescription lenses. See your optometrist for more information.

Protect your children from the sun in the snow

Children need as much sun protection in the snow as you do. Suggestions include:

- Instil good habits early. If you protect your child from a young age, they will learn to be SunSmart through example.
- Apply sunscreen 20 minutes before heading outside and reapply every two hours. Many companies produce sensitive skin formulas that are suitable for children.
- Children's headwear should provide protection for their ears, as well as their heads.
- Toddlers are great imitators and are more likely to wear their sunglasses or goggles if you lead by example and wear yours.
- Eyewear for children should have plastic instead of glass lenses for safety reasons and should meet Australian Standard AS/NZS 1067.

Where to get help

- Your doctor
- Pharmacist
- Optometrist
- SunSmart Tel. (03) 9514 6419
- Cancer Council Information and Support Tel. 13 11 20
- Multilingual Cancer Information Line, Victoria Tel. 13 14 50

Things to remember

- UV radiation is more intense in alpine regions than at sea level.
- Cover up with clothing and a hat, and apply broad-spectrum SPF 30+ lip balm to your lips and broad-spectrum SPF 30+ sunscreen to all exposed areas of skin.
- Wear sunglasses or goggles that meet Australian Standard AS/NZS 1067 to protect your eyes from the damaging effects of UV radiation.

This page has been produced in consultation with and approved by:

SunSmart

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