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7 Steps to Protect Yourself from the Winter Sun

By Roger Carr

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What outdoor activities did you do this past summer? Maybe you went on a vacation to the beach. Maybe you spent some time playing your favorite sports such as baseball, golf, or tennis. Maybe you went swimming or had a barbeque in the backyard with family and friends. Regardless of the outdoor activities you did over the summer, most likely you were aware that it was important to protect yourself from sun while outdoors.

Now winter is approaching. I am turning my attention to putting away my summer items to make room for the winter ones; long sleeve shirts for short sleeve ones, corduroy pants for shorts, and boots for sandals. Most of the sports equipment I have been using is going to get put away as well. But what about those items I have been using to protect myself from the sun? Things like my sunscreens, sunglasses, and sun protective hats and clothing.

You may be putting these items away and not using them during the winter. The National Council of Skin Cancer Prevention reported in their January 2003 newsletter that research shows only 3 percent of Americans routinely wear sunscreen during the fall months, and only 2 percent during the winter months. However, you can still get a sunburn and snow blindness during these months. The colder temperatures do not block the UV rays and reflections off the snow and higher altitudes can make matters even worse. You may be causing yourself significant, long-term damage by not properly protecting yourself.

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How do you protect yourself from the winter sun (or any other season)? Follow these simple sun safety action steps recommended by the US Environmental Protection Agency:

1. **Limit Time in the Midday Sun** – The sun's rays are strongest between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. Whenever possible, limit exposure to the sun during these hours.
2. **Wear a Hat** – A hat with a wide brim offers good sun protection to your eyes, ears, face, and the back of your neck – areas particularly prone to overexposure to the sun.
3. **Cover Up** – Wearing tightly woven, loose-fitting, and full-length clothing is a good way to protect your skin from the sun's UV rays.
4. **Wear Sunglasses that Block 99–100% of UV Radiation** – Sunglasses that provide 99–100% UVA and UVB protection will greatly reduce sun exposure that can lead to cataracts and other eye damage. Check the label when buying sunglasses.
5. **Always Use Sunscreen** – Apply a broad spectrum sunscreen with a Sun Protection Factor (SPF) of at least 15 or higher liberally on exposed skin. Reapply every 2 hours, or after working, swimming, playing, or exercising outdoors. Even waterproof sunscreen can come off when you towel off, sweat, or spend extended periods of time in the water.
6. **Avoid Sunlamps and Tanning Parlors** – The light source from sunbeds and sunlamps damages the skin and unprotected eyes. It's a good idea to avoid artificial sources of UV light.
7. **Watch for the UV Index** – The UV Index provides important information to help you plan your outdoor activities in ways that prevent overexposure to the sun. Developed by the National Weather Service (NWS) and EPA, the UV Index is issued daily in selected cities across the United States.

I am going to keep my sun protective items out to use this winter. I am trusting that you will do the same so that you can enjoy the outdoors while in the cold, on the ice, or in the snow. Have a terrific and safe winter!

Roger Carr lives in Fredericksburg, Virginia and is a contributing author to the Sun Clothing, etc.

monthly newsletter. Sun Clothing, etc. offers a full line of UPF and SPF rated sunprotection swimwear, clothing, hats, cabanas, sunscreen and accessories for the entire family. You can browse the store and sign up for the free newsletter at <http://www.sunclothingetc.com>.

Choosing Tanning Products Wisely

By Jerry Blackburn

Why is it that people look so good and healthy with a little colour, yet tanning can be so harmful to your skin? Recent studies and the news report that there are more cases than ever of melanoma and we all know that extensive exposure to the sun will cause your skin to age more quickly.

There are solutions to the problem of harmful UV sunlight that allow you to have all of the aesthetic benefits of a rich tan without the harmful side effects. The answer is in the types of tanning products you use to care for your skin while in the sun and after. **Pre-Tanning Preparation** It is always good to keep your skin moisturized. Cold weather and dry air can dry it out as well as salt water and chlorine. Always protect your skin with moisturizers day and night. They are most effective if applied immediately following a shower because the skin is moist and freshly exfoliated from washing.

Before going out in the sun, even in the winter, it is important to protect skin with a moisturizer that has a SPF protection factor of 15 or more. This rating is how many times more protected skin is than if it had nothing on it. It is so important to protect the face because it is more susceptible to sunburn. **Tanning Beds** Tanning beds are only slightly less harmful to the skin than the actual sun. However, there are tanning bed lotions meant especially for tanning beds that give a deeper tone to the skin and protect it at the same time. Artificial tanning bed light bulbs are extremely strong, and that is why you can tan in just a few minutes per session. This also prepares the skin to deepen in colour each time you go to the beach.

Many salons have tanning booths where you stand or beds where you lie down and get all areas of the body tan at once. This is a good place to go if you are planning to go on vacation to a warm weather climate in the middle of winter. You can enjoy all of your holiday without having to worry about sunburn, because you can condition your skin to the sun before you leave home. **Lotions & Creams and other Tanning Products** It can be confusing knowing what type of lotion to use to best protect your skin and still give you great colour. There are spray on lotions, facial tanner products, a lotions with all kinds of number on them! Much of what you should use depends on your skin type.

If you are fair skinned then you need to choose a tanning product that protects the most. An SPF rating of at least 15, but 30 would be better. Those with darker, olive skin tones can use a lotion with an SPF of 8 and be adequately protected, provided they reapply the lotion frequently if there are going to be in the sun for long periods of time. There are also sunless tanning products that offer no protection from UV rays, but will change the skin colour without the sun.

Jerry Blackburn released a lot of articles for the news section of

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Amongst his works Jerry is working on topics like tanning products and provides information on sunless tanning.



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