

## Keeping Safe in the Sun

Malta has around 300 days of sunshine every year, making it one of the warmest countries in Europe. With so many days of sun exposure, knowing what to do to stay safe in the sun is vital.

Enjoying time outdoors is an important part of life, with fresh air and physical activity helping to keep you healthy. However, being outdoors exposes you to UV (ultraviolet) rays from the sun, which can be harmful and with prolonged exposure, can lead to skin cancers. Skin cancer is the most common cancer in the world, and its prevalence is increasing.

You can reduce your risk of skin cancer by protecting your skin whilst outdoors. This does not only mean protection during prolonged exposure (such as sunbathing) but during all outdoor activities (walking, gardening, sports, working outdoors, etc.).

The best way to protect yourself against sun exposure is to avoid direct sunlight, especially in the summer months, and between 11am and 3pm. At these times, UV radiation is at its highest. You should wear a sunscreen with an SPF (sun protection factor) of 15 or higher for everyday activities and SPF 30 or higher for longer exposure, such as going to the beach or working outdoors. Sunscreen should be applied 15-30 minutes before sun exposure and re-applied every 2 hours, paying special attention to the face, neck and ears. No sunscreen is fully water resistant, re-apply after swimming and/or sweating. You should apply enough sunscreen – around 6 teaspoons for all exposed parts of the body.

Make sure your sunscreen is broad range (protects against both UVA and UVB rays) and check the expiry date and how long the product has been opened. Sunscreen becomes less effective over time.

Children are especially susceptible to sunburn as their skin is not fully matured yet. A sunscreen of SPF 50+ should be applied and children under the age of 1 should avoid direct sunlight altogether.

Wearing loose clothing, with long sleeves, trousers instead of shorts and a wide brimmed hat and sunglasses can all help protect you from the sun. Sunglasses should have a UV400 rating or '100% UV protection'.

It is recommended that sun protection becomes a part of your everyday life and SPF should be applied daily, even on cloudy days. Up to 80% of UV rays can pass through clouds or fog, meaning you are still at risk of sun damage even without direct sun exposure.