

- Use suntan lotion with a sun protection factor (SPF) rating of at least 15.
- Wear a hat and other clothing to shelter yourself from the sun.

For additional information:

- American Cancer Society, Inc., www.cancer.org/
- *Consumer Choices: Shirts and Stuff for Sun Safety*, ISU Extension, PM-1862.
- *How Shady is Your T-Shirt?*, ISU Extension, PM-1916.

Prepared by Janis Stone, extension textiles and clothing specialist, Iowa State University, in cooperation with the American Cancer Society.

No endorsement of products or firms is intended, nor is criticism implied of those not mentioned. Suggestions in this publication are intended to alert family members to sun safety, however, following these precautions cannot guarantee protection from sun or skin cancer.

... and justice for all
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File: Textiles and Clothing 7; Health and Safety 2-1, 2-2



**Is it time
to change
your hat?**



Hat styles differ in their ability to shade your face and protect you from sun. As we better understand the relationship between sun exposure and skin cancer, hat design takes on new importance.

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY
University Extension

PM1683 Revised July 2003

How to select a sun-safe hat

Hats that shade the neck, ears and face are widely available in stores. One hat design may not have all the features listed, and some features are mutually exclusive, or some features may be more important to you than others. If you wear a baseball-style cap most of the time, it may be time to change your hat. By selecting an appropriate hat and wearing it regularly, you can cut your risk of skin cancer.

Fabric

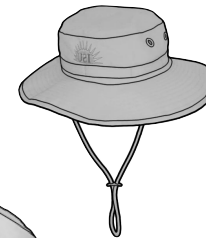
Hat fabrics may be labeled with claims about blocking the sun's ultraviolet rays.

Sunlight can penetrate many lightweight or open-weave materials. Fabric color and thickness also affects sunlight transmission. Canvas and other closely woven materials need air vents/eyelets to make the hat cooler to wear in heat. Sea-grass or straw hats may not need vents if they have an open weave, but an open weave offers less sun protection. To give better shade, these hats may have (1) a lining under the brim and crown or (2) a tightly woven brim and top-crown and an open-weave side-crown for ventilation.

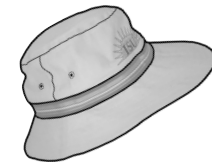
Alternative hat styles



Backflap: A size-adjustable cap with an attached flap shields neck and ears.



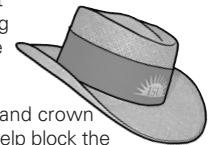
Booney: This lightweight fabric hat has a dark lining under brim to reduce eye strain.



Suncrusher™: Eyelets allow air flow; front brim is wider than back brim.



Outback: This canvas hat has a wide brim and chin strap.



Sea-grass straw: Brim and crown linings or close weaves help block the sun.

Style

A hat brim must hold its shape to provide shade for the neck and ears or a neck covering may be attached to the hat. A hat also must stay on your head in the wind. Fit affects how well a hat stays on your head. With some full-brim styles a chin strap may be helpful. The style of head-gear also must be appropriate for work activities. Hats that offer sun protection are seldom appropriate for protection against pesticide exposure.

Size

Hat styles are available in set sizes, adjustable fit sizes, or “one-size-fits-all.” Baseball-cap size can be adjusted easily, but they do not shade the neck, ears and face. Some hat styles are constructed with an inside elastic band to fit a greater number of individuals comfortably.

Common hat measurements

(measure around your head)

If your head measures ...	your hat size is ...	and is considered
21½-21¾ inches	6¾-7	Small
22¼-22⅝ inches	7⅛-7¼	Medium
23-23½ inches	7⅜-7½	Large
23⅞-24¼ inches	7⅞-7¾	Extra Large

Key design features

As you consider a new hat, ask yourself these questions:

Does the hat have ...

- a wide, stiff brim (3 inches or more)?
- a design that does not interfere with side vision?
- vents in the crown for air flow?
- an inside sweat band that's comfortable?
- a secure fit to stay on your head?
- a chin strap?
- an extended flap to cover your neck?

Is the hat made with a ...

- material that will block UV-a and UV-b rays?
- dark lining under the brim to reduce eyestrain?
- crushable, resilient material?

Is the hat style ...

- practical for your work or other activities?
- lightweight and comfortable to wear?
- priced reasonably?
- attractive in appearance?
- one your friends will admire?
- one you will want to wear regularly?

How can hats prevent skin cancer?

Many skin cancers occur on the face, neck and ears. A well designed hat can shield you from the sun's harmful ultraviolet (UV) rays. By wearing an appropriate hat, you can reduce your risk of disfiguring skin cancer.

You need the most protection at midday, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., when UV rays are most severe. Your exposure to UV rays increases 20 percent when reflected off a pool or lake, and you also can get a bad sunburn on cloudy days.

Why worry about sunburns and skin cancer?

Severe blistering sunburn before age 18 doubles the risk of skin cancer, which increases with age. According to the American Cancer Society, more than one million new cases of basal or squamous cell skin cancer occur annually in the U.S. The most serious form of skin cancer is melanoma, which will be diagnosed in about 54,200 persons this year. In 2003, an estimated 7,600 skin cancer deaths are predicted. Treatment may require surgery, radiation, or chemotherapy.

Skin cancer is more common if you are

- fair or light-skinned,
- have a family history of certain moles, or
- spend a lot of time outdoors in the sun, whether for work, sport or leisure.

Are all skin cancers the same?

No, five types are:

- Basal cell (most common and most likely cured)
- Squamous cell (it can spread, but is highly curable)
- Melanoma (5 percent of skin cancers, but causes the most deaths)
- Kaposi's sarcoma (common in AIDS patients)
- Cutaneous T-cell lymphoma

According to the American Cancer Society, melanoma is 10 times more likely in whites than blacks. The steady increase of melanoma (3 percent each year since 1981), suggests everyone needs to make better use of hats, clothing, and sunscreen.

With early detection and treatment, survival rates increase. Basal cell and squamous cell cancers are usually curable, if detected early. The five-year survival rate for melanoma is 89 percent.

Monitor your moles

Most moles are harmless, but learn your ABCDs to be alert for melanoma, which might be suspected when a mole has:

- A—**Asymmetry**: One half doesn't match the other.
- B—**Border irregularity**: The outside edges are ragged, notched or blurred.
- C—**Color variation**: The skin pigment is not uniform, but shades of tan, brown, black or red, white and blue.
- D—**Diameter** greater than 6 millimeters (about ¼-inch) with any sudden or continuing increase in size.

Make it a habit to ...

- Examine your skin carefully, front and back in a mirror every 6 to 8 weeks. Take note of any changes in your skin.
- Watch for sores that won't heal, red patches, scaliness, oozing, bleeding, or change in appearance of a bump. Note changes in sensation—itching, tenderness, or pain.
- Consult your doctor for regular checkups and any time you are in doubt.