

## Hats: Protecting your head, neck and face



Skin cancer is the most common form of cancer in New Zealand. Over 400 people die from melanoma and other skin cancers each year, and our skin cancer rates are one of the highest in the world. Yet, skin cancer can be prevented in most cases.

The major cause of skin cancer is over exposure to ultraviolet radiation (UVR) from the sun over many years, particularly during childhood and adolescence. Even if exposure does not cause obvious sunburn, damage still occurs and accumulates over the years so you should start protecting your skin now.

### Key messages

The Cancer Society advises sun protection when the Ultraviolet Index, which measures UVR intensity, is 3 or above. **Peak UVR times are from September to April, especially between 10am and 4pm. Around noon levels are often 'extreme'—a UVI above 10.**

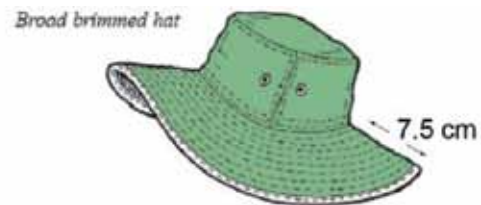
### Why hats?

Many people report getting burnt on the head, neck and face. These are also common sites for skin cancers, including melanoma, to occur so it is important to cover up.

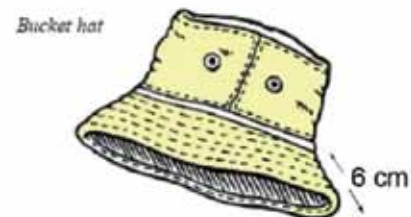
### What types of hats?

The following hats provide good shade to the face, back of the neck and ears when outdoors.

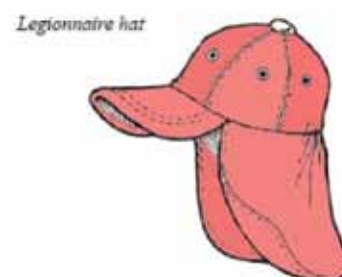
**Broad brimmed hats** should have a brim at least 7.5 cms wide. A broad brimmed hat that provides good shade can considerably reduce UVR exposure to the face.



**Bucket or surfie style hats** must have a deep crown and sit low on the head. The angled brim should be at least 6 cm to provide the face, neck and ears with plenty of protection from the sun. Please note that brims need to be measured from the rim on the inside of the hat.



**Legionnaire style hats** should have a flap that covers the neck and meets the sides of the front peak to provide protection to the side of the face.



**Baseball caps and sun visors are NOT recommended as they leave the ears and back of the neck exposed.**

## UVR and temperature

UVR cannot be seen or felt and the intensity of such radiation is not related to air temperature.

People often get sunburned on a cooler day because they tend to stay out outside longer rather than seeking shade or covering up as on a hot day.

## The Ultraviolet Index (UVI)

The Ultraviolet Index (UVI) is an international, scientific measure of the level of ultraviolet radiation (UVR) in the environment. The higher the number the greater the risk of skin damage. The Cancer Society advises sun protection when the UVI is 3 or higher.

UV Index	Sun Protection
<b>1-2 Green</b> <b>LOW</b>	No protection required
<b>3-5 Yellow</b> <b>MODERATE</b>	Protection required when spending extended periods in the sun, especially if you have fair skin
<b>6-7 Amber</b> <b>HIGH</b>	Protection essential between 10am and 4pm. Slip, slop, slap and wrap.
<b>8-10 Red</b> <b>VERY HIGH</b>	Seek shade between 10am and 4pm. Slip, slop, slap and wrap. Cover up. Reapply sunscreen regularly.
<b>11+ Purple</b> <b>EXTREME</b>	Reschedule outdoor activities for early morning and evening. Full protection essential.

Check out the Sun Protection Alert on the Met Service website: [www.metservice.com](http://www.metservice.com) or in weather section of your daily newspaper. The Sun Protection Alert includes local real time advice.