

UV and vitamin D

A message from the Cancer Council

The best source of vitamin D is ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun. A sensible balance of sun exposure and sun protection can protect against vitamin D deficiency without putting you at risk of skin cancer.

UV radiation levels vary depending on location, time of year, time of day, cloud coverage and the environment. Whenever UV radiation levels reach 3 and above, most people need to use sun protection. When UV levels are below 3, most people do not require sun protection, unless they are in high-altitude (alpine) regions or near highly reflective surfaces such as snow or water.

To check the UV levels for the day, go to the SunSmart UV Alert. There is a SunSmart UV Alert for over 300 cities across Australia. You can find them in the weather section of your daily newspaper or visit

[SunSmart UV alert website](#)

Recommended sunlight exposure

Some sun exposure on your arms, face, hands or similar surface area is important to reduce your risk of vitamin D deficiency. Recommended sunlight exposure for people with fair skin includes:

September to April – a few minutes of sunlight exposure either side of peak UV times. Always protect your skin from the sun with clothing, shade and/or sunscreen between 10am and 3pm. Reapply sunscreen every two hours.

May to August – two to three hours of sunlight exposure over the week. Take advantage of sunny periods. Sun protection is not necessary during the winter months in the southern areas of Australia, unless you are at high altitudes or near reflective surfaces like snow or water.

People with very dark skin may need three to four times more exposure time than people with fair skin to achieve sufficient levels of vitamin D. This is because the pigments in dark skin reduce the effects of UV radiation in the production of vitamin D.

Solariums have been linked to causing skin cancer and are **not recommended** as a way to treat vitamin D deficiency

Cancer Council