

Clothing

Description:

Wearing sun safe clothing and swimwear can help to protect skin against the harmful effects of ultraviolet radiation. Clothing and swimwear can be tested to identify the ultraviolet protection factor (UPF). The UPF rating is a measure of the protection provided by clothing fabrics. Sun safe clothing should be used with other sun protective measures, such as shade, clothing, sunscreen, hats and sunglasses.

Helpful Hints

To protect skin from ultraviolet radiation (UVR), clothing needs to:

- cover the majority of the body (shirts with collars and long sleeves with long pants and skirts are recommended)
- be made from a fabric with a tight weave
- be dark in colour (dark orange, red, green, blue and black are recommended)
- have a 30+ ultraviolet protection factor (UPF).

Practical Advice

Clothing and swimwear can be tested to identify its ultraviolet protection factor (UPF) rating. The UPF rating is a measure of the protection provided by clothing fabrics. The UPF can be reduced in clothing if the fabric is stretched, wet or over time due to wear.

The Australian/New Zealand Standard for Sun Protective Clothing describes standard laboratory procedures for measuring the UPF of fabrics and for labelling UPF rated clothing. Fabrics are assigned a UPF rating number and a protection category depending on how much UV radiation they block out. This table shows the UPF rating system developed by the Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency (ARPANSA).

UPF ratings and protection categories

15 - 24 UPF rating - 93.3 - 95.9% blocked (good protection) 25 - 39 UPF rating - 96.0 - 97.4% blocked (very good protection) 40 and over UPF rating - 97.5% or more (excellent protection)

The Standard states that the highest UPF rating garments may be labelled with is 50. Garments made from fabrics with ratings higher than 50 are labelled as UPF 50+. Garments with a UPF rating of 30+ are recommended.

To help consumers, all garments made from fabrics tested in ARPANSA recognised laboratories are labelled with a tag showing the garment's UPF rating (as pictured).

As well as wearing sun protective clothing, use other forms of sun protection practices such as staying out of the sun, seeking shade when outdoors, wearing sun protective hats and sunglasses and using sunscreen.

Other Resources

- Visit [Queensland Health's Sun safety](#) website
- Visit [The Cancer Council Queensland](#) website
- View the [Australian Standard AS/NZS 4399:1996 'Sun protective clothing - Evaluation and classification'](#)
- Visit the Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety website to access fact sheets on [radiation protection](#)

Related Content

Other fact sheets

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