

Sun Protection in the Snow

A bad case of sunburn can be extremely painful and definitely ruin a weekend or holiday in the snow. Even though temperatures may be extremely cold, the potential for sunburning can be very high.

The risk of sunburn is much greater in alpine regions than at sea level because the atmosphere is thinner and less pollution is present to filter out ultraviolet (UV) radiation.

Snow can reflect almost 90% of UV radiation so UV rays are much more likely to burn areas like under your chin and nose.

While sunburn is initially painful and uncomfortable it can also cause long term damage such as wrinkling, blotchiness and premature ageing. It can also cause skin cancer, so it is important to take precautions.

Sunscreen

Apply a broad-spectrum sunscreen, SPF 30 or greater, 20 minutes before you go into the sun (always reads the directions) and make sure all areas are covered, neck, face, ears and under chin. Carry a small tube of sunscreen with you and reapply frequently. Water resistant sunscreen is best if you are active.

The cold conditions and high levels of UV radiation can lead to dry, cracked and sunburnt lips. To avoid damage from UV radiation, use a lip balm with a SPF of 30+.

Eye protection

Eyes constantly need protection from UV radiation reflection from the snow. 'Snow blindness' or damage to the eye's cornea can occur after exposure to high levels of UV radiation. Over-exposure to UV radiation has also been linked to cataract development and other eye conditions.

Always wear safety approved eye wear, look for a British Standard mark or European safety standard mark and read the customer information label. Wrap-around sunglasses or tinted ski-goggles are the best at ensuring that no glare filters in at the bottom or sides.

Hats

Wear a woollen or fleece beanie that you can pull down over the ears and apply sunscreen to all the skin left exposed. Protect your neck with a scarf or high collared jumper. On warmer days wear a lighter hat in combination with sunscreen, sunglasses and lip protection.

Clothing

Generally the cold temperatures of the ski slopes means that clothing covers arms, legs and includes high collars and gloves on hands. As spring advances temperature on the slopes can become quite warm, do not make the mistake of stripping off and getting burnt. Always ski in long sleeved tops and trousers that protect against the sun and against grazing should you fall.