

The Australian Polo Federation sun protection policy for sports



The APF Sun protection policy

Background

When training, participating in, or watching sports, people often spend extended times outdoors during peak UV periods and are exposed to intense levels of direct and indirect ultraviolet (UV) radiation. This places them at higher risk of UV damage, including sunburn and skin cancer. UV exposure may also increase the risk of eye diseases.

Every sporting club has a responsibility to provide a safe environment for their staff, officials, volunteers, members and participants. Identifying hazards and risk management strategies are key to providing a safe sporting environment. This includes ultraviolet (UV) radiation and sun protection.

Definitions

- [Ultraviolet \(UV\) radiation](#) - a type of energy produced by the sun and some artificial sources, such as solariums and collariums. UV cannot be seen or felt. Direct and indirect UV exposure causes damage.
- [Sun protection times](#) - forecast by the Bureau of Meteorology for the time-of-day UV levels are predicted to reach 3 or higher, based on location. At these levels, sun protection is recommended. In Victoria, UV levels typically reach 3 or higher daily from mid-August to the end of April. Members are advised to continue to use sun protection beyond these times if outdoors for extended periods.
- [Skin cancer](#) - UV radiation damages DNA in the skin cells. If this damage does not repair itself, or the cells continue to be exposed to UV, further damage occurs leading to skin cancer including melanoma, which can spread to other organs. More than two in three Australians will be diagnosed with skin cancer in their lifetime. However, most skin cancer and UV damage can be prevented by using sun protection.
- [Eye disease](#) - Exposure to UV raises the risk of diseases such as [cataract](#) or growths on the eye, such as [pterygium](#) or cancer. These conditions can take many years to develop, but any period of time spent in the sun without protection can cause damage and increases risk of disease over time. Optometry Australia recommend UV protective sunglasses and broad-brimmed hats (if possible) when outside, all year round. This recommendation should be balanced with the need to also prevent sport-related eye injuries. For sports that present participants with moderate to high risk of eye injuries such as baseball and softball, cricket, hockey, lacrosse, tennis, and archery, eye protection from injury should be considered. For these sports, eyewear that is both protective from injury and UV may be appropriate.

Implementation

Club officials, sports coordinators, coaches, participants and volunteers are encouraged to access the daily local sun protection times and UV levels via the [SunSmart widget](#) on the club's website, [free SunSmart Global UV app](#), sunsmart.com.au or bom.gov.au.

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Schedules

Where possible, training, events and competitions are scheduled to minimise exposure to UV. Strategies include:

- Optimising use of shaded or indoor venues.
- Scheduling activities outside peak UV periods i.e., earlier in the morning or later in the afternoon.
- Reducing duration of warm-up activities and play with additional shaded break times.
- Frequently rotating player interchange and substitution.

Shade

- An assessment of existing shade is conducted at commonly used outdoor venues.
- Shade from buildings, trees and other structures is used where possible (e.g. for player interchange, marshalling areas, spectator areas, coach talks, presentation ceremonies).
- When not actively playing or between individual events, participants are encouraged to rest in shaded areas.
- Staff, officials and volunteers rotate to shaded areas and are encouraged to take breaks in the shade.
- Where there is insufficient natural or built shade, temporary shade structures are provided or participants and spectators are encouraged to bring their own temporary shade (e.g. tents or umbrellas).

Uniform/dress code (clothing, hats, sunglasses)

Uniform / dress code choices should be safe and inclusive, maximising equitable participation and optimal performance.

When competing, participants wear:

- Cool, well-ventilated clothing that covers as much skin as practicable prioritising coverage of the chest, shoulders and arms (with long sleeves preferred) and leg cover to at least the mid-thigh.
- Clothing (at any price point) that is made from densely woven fabric. Where possible, consider clothing made from UPF50+ fabric preferably with cooling or moisture-wicking properties.
- Head protection. When sun protective hats are not practical in competition, caps are permitted provided sunscreen is applied to the face, neck and ears which are not protected by this style of hat.
- Close-fitting, wrap-around sunglasses (where practical and safe) that meet the Australian Standard 1067 (Sunglasses: Category 2, 3 or 4) and cover as much of the eye area as possible.

When not competing, participants wear:

- Cool, well-ventilated clothing that covers as much skin as possible.
- Clothing (at any price point) that is made from densely woven fabric.
- Hats that shade the head, face, neck and ears (i.e., wide-brimmed, legionnaire or bucket style).
- Close-fitting, wrap-around sunglasses that meet the Australian Standard 1067 (Sunglasses: Category 2, 3 or 4) and cover as much of the eye area as possible.

For sports that involve short periods of intense competition and UV exposure is limited in duration, sun protective clothing may not be practical and sunscreen application before and after competition is a priority.

For sports with extended competition and periods of UV exposure, practical sun protective clothing is a priority.

This uniform/dress code is also an important OH&S and duty of care consideration for club officials, sports coordinators, coaches and volunteers.

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Sunscreen

As sunscreen does not completely block all UV, it is always used with other forms of sun protection. For any parts of skin not covered by clothing, SPF50 or 50+ broad-spectrum, water-resistant sunscreen is applied.

- Staff, officials, volunteers and participants are encouraged to apply sunscreen 20 minutes before training or playing and to reapply every two hours or immediately after sweating, swimming or towelling dry.
- Sunscreen is available at training and events.
- Sunscreen is stored below 30°C and kept in the shade.
- The sunscreen expiry date is monitored and replaced when expired.
- The first aid kit includes a supply of SPF50 or 50+ broad-spectrum, water-resistant sunscreen.

Leadership and education

As part of OHS UV risk controls, duty of care and role-modelling, officials, sports coordinators, coaches, staff and volunteers:

- Are supported to access resources, tools and learning to enhance their knowledge and capacity to promote sun protection across the club.
- Check and communicate the UV levels and sun protection times via the [SunSmart Widget](#) on the club's website or the free [SunSmart Global UV app](#).
- Implement and promote sun protection measures.
- Wear a sun-protective hat, covering clothing and sunglasses.
- Apply SPF50 or 50+ broad-spectrum, water-resistant sunscreen.
- Seek shade whenever possible.

SunSmart information is included in club guidelines/handbook which is accessible and promoted to all club members upon enrolment and throughout the season.

Club spectators/ supporters are encouraged and reminded to bring and use their own sun protection.

Relevant documents / links

- SunSmart
 - [SunSmart Global UV App / SunSmart widget](#)
 - [Protect your skin](#)
 - [Sun protection information for workplaces](#)
- Australian Institute of Sports Position Statement: [Sun Safe Sports](#)
- [Australian Sports Commission / Clearinghouse for Sport / Vicsport](#)
- [Good Vision for Life \(Optometry Australia\) – Sun safety / Sports vision](#)
- [Occupational Health and Safety Act](#) (2004)
- Department of Education and Training (Vic): [Sun and UV Protection](#) (Feb 2023)
- [Child Wellbeing and Safety Act 2005 \(Vic\) \(Part 2: Principles for children 1 \(c\)\) / Occupational Health and Safety Act](#) (2004)
- WorkSafe Victoria: [Sun protection](#)
- Safe Work Australia: [Guide on exposure to solar ultraviolet radiation \(UVR\)](#) (Mar 2020)

Please note: Certain health conditions and medications mean some people are more sensitive to UV radiation and need to use sun protection at all times regardless of the UV levels. Please make sure your policy includes the particular needs of these children and staff at your school. For further information see Skin cancer risk factors at sunsmart.com.au/skin-cancer.

Next policy review due: **[01/01/2026]**

Designated authority: **APF**

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