

**- Cancer**

# May is skin cancer awareness month – remember how to enjoy the sun safely

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Top Irish skin expert Eavanna Breen, who is solely responsible for the fabulous skin of celebrities from Greg O’Shea to Samantha Mumba, wants to remind the Irish public of the importance of protecting your skin from the sun, as the summer fast approaches. Never has this been more important considering the staggering rate of skin cancer in Ireland.

Over 75% of the Irish population have the ‘Celtic skin type’, meaning we freckle and burn uncommonly easily – directly exposing our weak, unprepared, and already vulnerable Irish skin to powerful UV radiation. Despite the vast amount of education and information available to us on the perils of sun damage, skin cancer is the number one most diagnosed cancer in Ireland, with an estimated 12,919 average annual diagnoses.

Many Irish people do not take necessary precautions while out in the sun, hoping to achieve a “healthy” summer glow. The simple fact is that if you fail to protect your skin from UV radiation, you are putting yourself at risk. If you allow your skin to become red and burn, this risk dramatically increases as one sunburn every 2 years triples your risk of melanoma.

## TOP TIPS

The skincare and beauty guru has drafted her top 5 tips for ensuring you keep your skin protected all summer long:

Step 1: Seek some shade – “Spending time in the shade is the most effective thing you can do to avoid being in the sun too long. Good shade can give up to 75% protection from UV rays. If you are someone who sits at a window all day or drives a lot in the course of your day, you need to use clothes and sunscreen to protect your skin. That window is not protecting you.”

Step 2: Be clothes conscious – “Choose clothes that cover as much skin as possible – some fabrics give better UV protection than others” (Linen, cotton, and hemp let fewer UV rays through).

Step 3. Embrace the hat – Ensure the hat gives shade to the face, neck, head and ears.

Step 4. Wear Sunscreen – “The sun’s UV rays penetrate the skin and reinforce old damage that might have happened years previously, even as a child. The skin remembers that damage and is constantly weakened by the regular exposure to UV rays. It is a common misconception that darker skin types shouldn’t be concerned; everyone is at risk, even darker skin types. Although lighter skin will be that bit more at risk of developing cancer.

“There are only two occasions when you do not need to wear sunscreen – Early in the day for no more than 15–20 mins to allow for vitamin D production; and when it’s dark outside.”

Step 5: Know the UV index – “When the UV Index is three or more, you are at greater risk of skin damage leading to skin cancer. Get into the habit of checking the UV Index as a reminder of the need to be SunSmart every day.”