Enjoy your season in the sun and still play it safe

As children, summertime meant endless outdoor fun. As teens, it meant sunbathing with baby oil, to ensure the darkest tan this side of Aruba. Fast-forward to adulthood, where a thinning ozone layer and a higher incidence of skin cancer have made us wary of enjoying sunlight. But while cancer is a serious concern, you don't have to become a summer shut-in. Use these tips to help you safely enjoy your season in the sun.

Avoid 10 to 4
For years, health experts and meteorologists alike have warned, "Stay indoors during the heat of the day." C. William Hanke, M.D., a vice president of The Skin Cancer Foundation, concurs. "Avoid the peak hours of the sun. Its rays are the strongest between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., so try to schedule outdoor activities around those times."

Slather On the Sunscreen
Liberally apply sunscreen about 20 to 30 minutes before going outside. Because the sun emits two types of harmful rays-UVA and UVB-your sunscreen should provide "broad-spectrum" protection against both, with a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 15.

Reapply, Reapply, Reapply
Len Lichtenfeld, M.D., deputy chief medical officer for the American Cancer Society, asserts that reapplying sunscreen may be the most neglected step in the sun-safety regimen. "Don't just put it on and forget it. Sunscreen should be reapplied about every two hours while you're outdoors, and every 45 minutes if you're swimming."

Hat's It!
Head out with a hat that protects your face, neck and ears. Choose one with a wide brim at least three to four inches around for suitable coverage. The bucket and wide-brimmed farmer's hats, in a lightweight straw or cotton twill, are two classic, stylish choices.

Seek Shade
Seek shade, but do so with caution, says David. J. Goldberg, M.D., a vice president of The Skin Cancer Foundation. "While trees and umbrellas provide protection, you still need to protect yourself under them. The sun's rays can scatter, penetrate and reflect to reach you."

Dress for the Occasion
Covering up in dark, tight-knit fabric is the best way to protect your skin, but it's no fun in the summer heat. Fortunately, some companies now make lightweight clothing with effective sun protection. These items bear an ultraviolet protection factor or UPF (think of it as an SPF for fabric) of 15 to 50 on their labels. Check out online retailers sunsolutionsclothing.com and sharksuit.com, which offer attractive options with a UPF.

Play Movie Star
Forget paparazzi cameras; you've got a better reason to shield your eyes. "The eye area is incredibly vulnerable," Lichtenfeld says. "Prolonged sun exposure can damage your eyes and increase your risk of developing eye disease." He recommends sunglasses that block 99 to 100 percent of UVA and UVB radiation.