It's summertime in the northern hemisphere, and you're excited to get outside and have fun. Hotter temperatures may lead you to the water to cool off. Whether swimming in a lake or paddle boarding on open water, you'll want to consider UV exposure and water safety. Did you know your swimsuit color affects your safety in the water? Certain colors can improve your visibility in the water. Plus, specific fabric types decrease your UV exposure. Let's dive into the details.

Understanding sun protection and UV exposure

UVA and UVB are two types of ultraviolet radiation produced by the sun, which may cause health hazards. The differences lie in their wavelengths and the depth at which they penetrate the skin.

- UVA wavelengths bypass the outermost skin layer, the epidermis, through the dermis, then enter deeper subcutaneous layers. This can result in deeper skin and muscle tissue damage. **UVA rays cause oxidative damage responsible for premature skin aging and may play a role in skin cancer.**
- UVB light waves are absorbed by the epidermis, which is the outer layer of the skin. This absorption is what causes suntans

and sunburns. However, too much exposure to UVB light can increase the risk of developing skin cancer, making comprehensive protection essential.

One way to protect your skin against UVA and UVB exposure is by applying sunscreen. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recommends using broad-spectrum sunscreens with an SPF value of 15 or higher on a daily basis. Additionally, it's important to note that the SPF values on sunscreen products reflect the level of sunburn protection provided, not the time of sun exposure allowed. Higher SPF numbers do provide longer protection against sunburn, but reapplication is still necessary every two hours or after swimming or sweating.

A focus on sunburn prevention and long-term health risks

A day out in the sun may result in burned skin. A sunburn is skin damage caused by UV radiation overexposure, which is a risk factor and leading cause of skin cancer. Skin cancer rates are increasing in the United States, with 100,640 new cases of skin melanomas and 8,290 related deaths in 2024.

Therefore, it's a smart choice to prioritize using UV protection products and clothing to help reduce your chance of acquiring certain types of skin cancer.

Parents should avoid using sunscreen on babies younger than six months since their skin

is generally more sensitive and prone to irritation. When choosing clothing for extended outdoor use in sun-drenched areas, select those having an ultraviolet protection factor or UPF rating of 30 (at minimum). The fabric color, construction, and content determine their rating as UPF clothing helps reduce UVA and UVB penetration to the skin.

Color and UV protection: making smart choices

How often do you consider the color of your swimsuit or clothing for its protective qualities? When determining how to guard yourself against UV rays, there are a few things you can factor into your decision.

[supporting image idea]

- **Darker colors** provide more UV protection than lighter colors. Choose blue or black instead of white or pastel colors.
- **Bright and neon colors** are better than pale colors. Pick bright orange or neon pink over light blue or pale yellow.

Why are these colors recommended over others? Dark colors absorb more UV light than lighter colors, thus reducing the amount of UV light reaching your skin. The same theory regarding bright and neon colors — they absorb UV light more than paler colors do. The type of fabric your swimsuit and outdoor clothing consists of is also essential to shield you from UV exposure. Select synthetic materials like polyester and nylon that are more dense than

cotton. These fabrics consist of a tighter weave that reduces UV penetration to the skin.

Beyond sun safety: color and visibility in water

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Depending on whether you're in an open water or pool environment, you'll want to be highly visible. Simply put, **swimsuit colors in water look different than out of water**. Research performed by Alive Solutions, a company specializing in aquatic safety, compared numerous swimsuit colors to water visibility in various settings.

A lake setting with poor visibility or a pool setting having both a light and dark bottom all had different results. The top picks for high visibility in a lake are bright and contrasting colors. Alive Solutions recommends choosing neon orange, yellow, and green colors. Remember that many factors can affect water visibility in an open water area, including the weather and clarity of the water.

The visibility of swimsuits in a pool depends on the color of the pool bottom. For instance, a white or light blue swimsuit is barely visible against a light-colored pool bottom. Popular swimsuit colors like blue and green almost completely disappear in such conditions. Similarly, dark-colored swimsuits in pools with dark bottoms become hard to see at a depth of about 18 inches, especially with water agitation.

Neon or hot pink was visible in pools but not lakes. Overall, **experts recommend bright and contrasting colors for optimal visibility and safety in both pools and lakes**.

Consider both sun protection and water visibility

Based on research and expert recommendations, neon orange and similar colors seem to be safe choices for swimsuits. Remember that tightly woven, synthetic material offers more UV protection than natural, closely knit fibers when picking out swimwear.

General water safety tips for a fun day out

A pool or beach day can be enjoyable at any age. However, being in or around water can be hazardous if you're not paying attention. Learning some tips and following safety guidelines makes for worry-free fun.

- **Never swim alone.** Always swim with a buddy or in a designated swimming area with lifeguards on duty or water watchers.
- **Be aware of water conditions**, currents, and potential hazards, especially in open water or natural water environments.

- **Don't overestimate your swimming abilities** or physical fitness. Know your limitations regarding any medical conditions you may have.
- **Never swim under the influence** of alcohol or drugs.
- **For children:** Use Coast Guard-approved life jackets, ensure you are actively watching, and never leave them unattended near water.
- Know how to call for help in an emergency. Learn cardiopulmonary resuscitation or CPR and first aid to help others.

Water safety resources

If you or your family plan to be in and around water, consider learning lifelong skills that may save a life. National organizations that teach water safety, CPR, and first aid include the **American Red Cross** and the **YMCA**. Many local community organizations offer courses on water safety as well. Contact your city manager for information.

Learning water safety guidelines is essential for all. Prepare yourself to manage an emergency or, even better, to avoid one. A fun and safe experience is attainable when you combine sun and water-safe swimsuits with water-safety practices.

FAQ

What is the most visible swimsuit color in the water?

Bright colors such as neon orange, yellow, or green are the most visible colors in water. Lighter and paler colors, like light blue, pastels, and white, seemed to disappear with water agitation. Contrasting colors for the water environment are recommended.

What color swimsuit is the best for UV protection?

Dark colors such as black or blue provide the best UV protection because they absorb UV rays thus reducing penetration to the skin. Neon and bright colors also provide better UV protection for the skin than lighter colors, although less than dark colors.

Can your swimsuit protect you from UV exposure and provide water safety?

Choosing swimwear with both bright neon colors and synthetic fabrics can offer both UV protection and improve water visibility. Darker colors provide better UV protection than brighter colors; however, they are less visible in water that is murky, agitated, or deeper than 18 inches.

What's the best swimsuit color for swimming in a pool versus a lake?

Bright and neon colors stand out better in a pool; however, hot pink does not have high visibility in light bottom-colored pools. Dark colors like blue and green in darker bottom pools have poor visibility. Bright contrasting colors are best for lakes, but water clarity can be a factor.

Key takeaways:

Dark swimsuit colors such as black or blue provide optimal UV protection because they absorb UV radiation reducing penetration to your skin.

Bright and contrasting swimsuit colors provide to best visibility in the water.

Learning water safety and preparing for a day in or near the water is essential for optimal fun for all. Consider learning CPR and first aid practices in case of emergency. Ensure you understand the potential hazards of the water environment you are in or near.

Resources:

1. Tips to stay safe in the sun: From sunscreen to sunglasses.
2. Comparison of the biological impact of UVA and UVB upon the skin with functional proteomics and immunohistochemistry.
3. Sun-protective clothing: a safe, simple way to keep the rays at bay.
4. What are the safest swimsuit colors?
5. Water safety.