



Employee FAQ: COVID-19 and UV

Can UV light cure COVID-19?

The short answer is no. The longer answer requires some explaining. Ultraviolet (UV) radiation consists of three primary types of light: UVA, UVB and UVC. Each has a different wavelength. However, all can cause damage to the skin. Only UVA and UVB light from the sun can reach the earth. UVC light from the sun has the shortest wavelength of the three. It is absorbed into the ozone and never reaches the earth. Exposure to UVC light comes from man-made sources like welding torches or devices that use UVC light to disinfect surfaces. UVC light is only used to disinfect unoccupied spaces, like empty hospital rooms or empty subway cars. UVC light devices should never be used as a way to disinfect any part of the skin.

Should I spend more time in the sun to increase my vitamin D to prevent getting COVID-19?

Current research links vitamin D deficiency with a higher risk of becoming infected with COVID-19. However, the skin damage that can occur when spending more time in the sun, especially without proper sun protection during months when the UV Index is high, outweigh the benefit of increasing vitamin D. Half of Americans are low in vitamin D. Higher rates of vitamin D deficiency occur in African Americans, Hispanics and other individuals living in areas where it is difficult to get enough sun exposure in winter, like Chicago. The good news is there are healthy ways to increase vitamin D. These include eating more foods high in vitamin D, like fish, fortified milk and margarine, egg yolks, liver, Swiss cheese, and fortified breakfast cereals, or taking a vitamin D supplement.

With COVID-19 precautions, is it safer to be outside than inside?

Experts say being outdoors should not be considered completely safe. You should continue to avoid crowds and keep 6 feet of distance between yourself and others. If you want to get together with friends or family, health officials encourage gathering outdoors instead of indoors. It can be easier to practice social distancing outdoors. Spending extra time outside means it is even more important to practice sun protection, especially during times when the UV Index is high. Wear a hat, long sleeves, sunglasses, and sunscreen. If you find yourself spending more time in a vehicle, remember to practice sun safety there, too. UV can still cause skin damage through windows.

Can COVID-19 spread during summer, when it's hot and sunny outside?

Yes, COVID-19 can be transmitted in any season. Help slow the spread of COVID-19 by following recommendations from health officials. These include frequent hand-washing, maintaining 6 feet of distance from others, wearing a mask when unable to maintain 6 feet of distance, and gathering outdoors instead of indoors.