



# HATS

## The Stylish Route to Sun Protection

PATRICIA UNDERWOOD



I am captivated by hats. After many years as a millinery designer I still find myself continually thinking about them and all they can do. What intrigues me is their perfect combination of art and function. A well-designed hat is not only attractive, stylish and wearable, but also inherently functional. Whether it is completing our look, keeping us warm, announcing our team affiliation, or offering privacy, a hat helps us feel and look alluring, smart, intriguing... *better*.

In protecting our skin from the harmful effects of the sun, a hat truly fulfills its role as an object of beauty and practicality:

- A wide-brimmed (3-inch or greater) hat covers places where it is difficult to apply sunscreen, i.e., the scalp as well as places where people often forget to apply sunscreen, such as the tops of the ears and the back of the neck.

- When you're wearing a hat, your face has more protection than with sunscreen alone.
- A hat will shade your eyes, protecting its delicate internal structures and keeping you from squinting in the sun.
- A hat in the summer can help keep you cool.
- Hats are attractive and fun.

### HOW DO YOU CHOOSE THE RIGHT HAT?

There is no hard and fast rule on what style to wear. I suggest that when trying on hats you always stand in front of a full-length mirror: See how the hat works in proportion to your body and your outfit. Ideally, the brim should come to about the ends of the shoulders. However, if you will be poolside, beachside or anywhere else in the sun for a lengthy period, you want an oversize brim to get as much skin coverage as possible — think, 'More skin, more brim'.

Also, coordinating with or accenting your swimwear with the right hat is as important as the nail polish on your toes for a chic look at the beach or pool — think movie star glamour.

Make sure the hat is not tight on your head, as a hat will never stretch. And when putting it on, give it a little shift to one side. You will be surprised to see how a hat placed at a slight angle will enhance your facial features.

Research has shown that broad-brimmed hats provide protection equivalent to an SPF (sun protection factor) of approximately 5 for the nose, ears and neck. [For a discussion of the shade provided by hats, see "If You Can See the Sunlight, Seek the Best Shade" on p.44.] Although nothing can guarantee 100 percent protection, the hat is an important weapon in the skin protection arsenal.

Hats create amazing possibilities. ■

**PATRICIA UNDERWOOD** is a New York-based millinery designer. She has received a number of awards and her hats are featured in the permanent collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Costume Institute and the Fashion Institute of Technology's Museum at FIT, both in New York City. She is a board member emeritus of The Council of Fashion Designers of America.



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## HATS: Stylish and Practical



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