

# Choosing A Sunscreen

## For everyday sun protection

Sunscreen should be worn every day, regardless of the weather or season. Sun exposure occurs all day long, through clouds, through regular glass windows of our homes and cars, and in the time spent walking to the grocery store or driving in the car.

Limiting sun exposure, by wearing hats/gloves/sun-protective clothing and avoiding exposure between 10am-2pm, is essential. You should wear sunscreen every day on exposed areas (i.e., face, neck, V-neck chest, hands/forearms, and legs) for both skin cancer protection and defense against photo-aging.

SPF (Sun Protection Factor) is the ratio of time in the sun required to sunburn with sunscreen on to the length of time in the sun required to burn without sunscreen.

- **SPF30:** blocks 96.7% of ultraviolet radiation
- **SPF50:** blocks 98% of ultraviolet radiation

Choose a daily sunscreen that is at least SPF30 (if you have dark skin) or SPF40-50 (if you have light skin) and has UVA/UVB (ie broad spectrum) coverage. If you have a personal or family history of skin cancer, or if you are often outdoors, consider using a sunscreen with SPF 50+.

There are two basic types of sunscreen:

- **Mineral sunscreen (physical blockers):** physically blocks ultraviolet radiation. Includes sunscreens such as zinc oxide or titanium dioxide.
- **Chemical sunscreens:** contain special chemicals that absorb ultraviolet radiation. Includes oxybenzone, avobenzone, ecamsule, padimate O, PABA, octyl methoxycinnamate, octyl salicylate, phenylbenzimidazole sulfonic acid, homosalate, octisalate, octocrylene, octinoxate.

There are now many different types of sunscreen products, and it is recommended that you choose one that matches your daily activities and/or skin-type.

**For face:** UVA/UVB (broad spectrum) coverage greater than SPF30 is recommended

- There are now many facial moisturizers that contain sunscreen, and this is adequate for regular daily use if the majority of your day is spent indoors and/or out of direct sunlight. Re-apply the sunscreen every few hours throughout the day.
- Choose a non-comedogenic (non-pore clogging) sunscreen with zinc oxide and/or titanium dioxide if you have acne-prone skin or if you experience skin irritation with other chemical-containing sunscreens. Consult your doctor if sunscreens cause persistent significant skin irritation, or if you believe that you have a sunscreen allergy.
- There are now several powder-based products containing mineral sunscreens that can be applied over moisturizer or make-up. Tinted (skin-colored) products are available.

**For lips:** lip-balm containing SPF30 is recommended

**For body:** UVA/UVB (broad spectrum) coverage greater than SPF50 is recommended

- lotion, cream, gel is recommended over spray
- consider using SPF30-50 UV-blocking articles of clothing as an alternative to sunscreen

## What about sun protection for sports and outdoor activities?

For water sports, a wetsuit or UV-proof (SPF50) water jersey (aka rash guard, like what surfers or lifeguards wear) is recommended. Other sun-exposed areas require special sunscreens that will stay on in the water or after sweating. They need to be reapplied often, especially after sweating, toweling off or after extended periods of time when skin is immersed in water.

- Very water resistant sunscreens: SPF is maintained after 80 minutes water immersion
- Water resistant sunscreens: SPF is maintained after 40 minutes water immersion

The information contained in this publication should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your physician. There may be variations in treatment that your physician may recommend based on individual facts and circumstances.