

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

SPF (sun protection factor) is the ratio of time in the sun required to sunburn with sunscreen-protected skin to the length of time in the sun required to burn without sunscreen.

- **SPF 30** blocks 96.7% of ultraviolet radiation.
- **SPF 50** blocks 98% of ultraviolet radiation.

Choose a daily sunscreen that is at least SPF 30 (if you have dark skin) or SPF 40-50 (if you have light skin) and that contains broad spectrum coverage against UVA and UVB. 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 sunscreens** physically block ultraviolet radiation. They include sunscreens such as zinc oxide or titanium dioxide.
- **Chemical sunscreens** contain special chemicals that absorb ultraviolet radiation. These include oxybenzone, avobenzone, ecamsule, padimate O, PABA, octyl methoxycinnamate, octyl salicylate, phenylbenzimidazole sulfonic acid, homosalate, octisalate, octocrylene, or octinoxate.

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

Face: UVA/UVB (broad spectrum coverage) greater than SPF 30 is recommended.

- There are 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. Reapply the sunscreen every few hours throughout the day.
- Choose a noncomedogenic (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 or significant skin irritation, or if you believe that you have a sunscreen allergy.
- There are several powder-based products containing mineral sunscreens that can be applied over moisturizer or makeup. Tinted (skin-colored) products are available.

Lips: Lip balm containing SPF 30 is recommended.

Body: UVA/UVB (broad spectrum coverage) greater than SPF 50 is recommended.

- A lotion, cream, or gel is recommended over a spray.
- Consider using SPF 30-50 / 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 (SPF 50) 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 of water immersion.
- **Water resistant sunscreens:** SPF is maintained after 40 minutes of water immersion.