

I Screen, You Screen

We all screen with sunscreen — to keep from getting **burned**

Summertime and tanning is easy, unless you are among the millions of people who burn after only a few minutes in the sun. The only certain way to avoid sunburn is to stay indoors. But when it's fun in the sun you're after, sunscreen is essential.

What Causes Sunburn?

Sunburn is caused by a type of ultraviolet (UV) light known as UVB, which can lead to skin cancer.

While UVB is still responsible for much of the skin damage caused by sunlight, especially sunburn, another ultraviolet light — UVA — may be an important factor in other types of sun damage.

The role of sunscreens is to absorb, reflect or scatter damaging UV rays before they have a chance to interact with the skin. Most sunscreens do a good job blocking UVB but fewer filter UVA. When protecting your skin, you need a product to block both UVA and UVB rays.

What Is SPF?

Protection is a combination of skin type and length of time spent in the sun. This will tell you what SPF (sun protection factor) sunscreen will best protect you from sunburn.

A sunscreen with an SPF of 10 should let you stay in the sun 10 times longer than you could without sunscreen. That means if you burn in 15 minutes, you should be able to stay out 150 minutes (2.5 hours) without burning. Even with that rule of thumb, experts warn to reapply sunscreen every 60-90 minutes or after being in the water.

Skin Types

According to the American Academy of Dermatology (AAD), knowing your skin type is important when choosing a sunscreen that will work best for you. There are six primary skin types.

- Redheads with blue or gray eyes generally have Type 1 skin, which burns and freckles but never tans. AAD recommends Type 1



people use a sunscreen with the highest SPF rating, as should all children.

- Type 2 skin — light blondes with blue or green eyes — eventually develops a tan but always burns after 20-30 minutes in the sun. Sunscreen with a high SPF (45) is recommended.

- People with Type 3 skin usually have dark blond or light brown hair and blue, green or brown eyes. They can develop a dark tan but will burn some, so they should begin with a high SPF, at least 30.

- People with Type 4 skin normally have naturally dark complexions, brown hair and eyes, and always tan dark brown. Even so, they can burn and should use at least an SPF 15 sunscreen.

- With Middle Eastern or Latin American ancestry, Type 5 skin rarely burns but should use a light sunscreen of SPF 4.

- Type 6, with black hair and dark skin usually never burns, but play it safe and use a sunscreen of SPF 4.

Follow the Directions

In order to work efficiently, sunscreens must be used as directed:

- Apply sunscreen 20-30 minutes before going into the sun so it can be absorbed by the skin and become less likely to wash off when you perspire.

- Use 1 ounce of sunscreen, about enough to fill a shot glass, to properly cover the exposed areas of your body.

- Apply sunscreen on all parts of your skin exposed to the sun, including the ears, back, shoulders, the backs of your knees and legs, and your feet. Don't forget your face, but be careful when applying sunscreen around the eyes so you do not irritate them. And use a lip balm with sunscreen.

- Reapply as often as directed, especially if you're going in and out of the water or sweating a lot. Even waterproof sunscreen will wash off, and all sunscreen will rub off. ■

Resource

The American Academy of Dermatology. *Facts about sunscreen*. Retrieved Feb. 13, 2007 from the World Wide Web: <http://www.aad.org/public/News/DermInfo/DInfoSunscreenFAQ.htm>

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