

Yes, more sunscreen!

Wear it. Wear plenty of it. Here's what you need to know about sunscreen labels and ingredients.

WATER-RESISTANT

Sunscreens claiming to be waterproof and sweat proof are no longer on the shelves. In their place are 40- and 80-minute water-resistant sunscreens. They offer sun protection for a limited time when exposed to water. Choose the 80-minute water-resistant product and reapply after swimming or toweling off.

SUN PROTECTION FACTOR (SPF)

Some people think that SPF measures the length of time users can be in the sun before getting sunburned. Not so. SPF defines the amount of ultraviolet B (UVB) radiation needed to cause sunburn, even while sunscreen is on. Sunscreens with SPF 2 through SPF 14 can prevent sunburn, but they provide no protection against skin cancer or premature skin aging. Such sunscreens must now carry a warning label stating, "Spending time in the sun increases your risk of skin cancer and early skin aging. This product has been shown only to help prevent sunburn, not skin cancer or early skin aging."

For a sunscreen to reach its listed SPF, a full ounce (think of a shot glass full) needs to be applied. Best choice: SPF 30 or higher and plenty of it.



BROAD SPECTRUM

Until the final FDA requirements took effect, sunscreens were only evaluated and regulated for their ability to protect against UVB radiation, as measured by SPF. Now, sunscreens also are evaluated for their UVA protection. Sunscreens labeled as "broad spectrum" protect against both UVA and UVB radiation.

Broad spectrum sunscreen use should not be limited to beach outings or summer months. Skin aging process is significantly slower among people who apply broad spectrum sunscreen daily, year round.

PHYSICAL OR CHEMICAL?

A "physical" sunscreen contains active ingredients like zinc oxide or titanium dioxide. These ingredients sit on the skin's surface and physically block and reflect UV ray. They are generally better for sensitive skin. Chemical sunscreens use organic compounds that absorb UV rays. Some sunscreens are hybrids because they contain both chemical and physical active ingredients.

Whether you choose chemical, physical, or hybrid sunscreen, they all protect your skin from the damaging effects of the sun's UVA and UVB rays.

