

BETTER HEALTH



EVERYTHING UNDER THE SUN

Surf-splashing, picnics, gardening: lots of upsides to summer days outdoors. The downside: Sun exposure is linked to about 90 percent of common skin cancers, and shockingly few of us take the basic preventive step of using sunscreen. Packed with the latest advice, our guide will help you do summer sun safely.

Y ou know that sunscreen is your No. 1 protection against ultraviolet radiation that causes skin cancer and wrinkles. But even after all these years of warnings from doctors, new research shows that only 29 percent of women and 14 percent of men regularly use sunscreen. The reasons run the gamut: "I want some color" (hello, self-tanner). "I don't have time" (can't spare two minutes?) "It's too confusing to pick the right one" (we're here to break it all down so you can choose a sunscreen formula that fits your skin and your schedule). No more excuses.

SUNSCREEN BASICS

LABEL DECODER Your first stop: reading the bottle. Here's what it means.

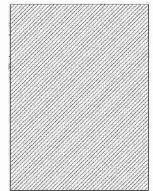
■ **Sun Protection Factor (SPF)**

A sunscreen's SPF indicates the strength of its protection against UVB rays and the length of time you can be in the sun before burning. The time factor: If your skin typically takes about 20 minutes to turn pink, SPF 30 (which most doctors recommend as a minimum) theoretically allows you to be out 30 times longer (or 10 hours) before you fry. "However, most sunscreens start to break down after two hours and must be reapplied, so no product will ever provide all-day,

continuous protection," says Susan H. Weinkle, M.D., a dermatologist and surgeon in Bradenton, Florida. The strength factor: The bigger the SPF number, the more UVB radiation is blocked, but after SPF 50, the increased protection is negligible. Most doctors don't advise going any higher, as it might give you a false sense of security and stop you from reapplying regularly.

■ **Broad spectrum** Any sunscreen you choose must have these two words on the label, says Albert M. Lefkowitz, M.D., associate clinical professor of medicine at the Mount Sinai School of Medicine in New York. Broad spectrum means the sunscreen guards against both UVB and UVA rays. UVB rays are the ones that burn, while UVA rays penetrate deeper and are to blame for most signs of aging (fine lines, brown spots). Both can cause skin cancer.

■ **Active ingredients** Sunscreens deflect UV rays with either physical or chemical filters. Physical filters include titanium dioxide and zinc oxide, which act as solid barriers "like little metal mirrors, which UV rays bounce off," explains Daniel Ladd, Jr., D.O., a dermatologist in Austin, Texas, and spokesperson for The [Skin Cancer Foundation](#). If you have sensitive skin, some dermatologists recommend the physical filters. Chemical





30 MINUTES

About how long it takes for your skin to fully absorb sunscreen. Leave plenty of time to apply before heading out.

DON'T MISS THESE SPOTS!

Your ears, neck, backs of your legs, bald spots, and hard-to-reach places (like the middle of your back) don't get the sunscreen TLC they deserve. And this is where doctors often find skin cancer. More melanoma (the deadliest type) is found on men's backs and the backs of women's calves than anywhere else. Try a spray or enlist a friend to help so you cover every inch.

ingredients, such as avobenzone, oxybenzone, and ecamsule, absorb UV rays, capturing them before they penetrate your skin.

■ **Water-resistant** These sunscreens will continue to work while you're in the water (or while you sweat) for one of two FDA-approved time frames: 40 or 80 minutes. After that, time to reapply. Note: There is no such thing as a "waterproof" formula.

HOW MUCH TO APPLY

Of the diligent crew who regularly apply sunscreen (good work), only about half apply the recommended amount. How much should you use?

■ **Lotion or gel** "A 1-ounce, shot-glass-size amount provides good coverage for most bodies," says Melanie Palm, M.D., a dermatologist in Solana Beach, California, and a spokesperson for the [Skin Cancer Foundation](#). "A nickel-size dollop should be enough for the face."

■ **Spray** Coat every area twice to make sure it's going on evenly, Palm says.

■ **Stick** Swipe over a spot four times, says Joshua Zeichner, M.D., director of cosmetic and clinical research in dermatology at Mount Sinai Hospital in New York. Sticks are usually best for all those small areas: the face, ears, neck, backs of your hands.

■ **Powder** "A sunscreen face powder is good for touch-ups during the day, and it should be applied

generously to your whole face," Weinkle says. Don't forget the hairline, over the neck, and on top of the ears and any other exposed skin.

KID ZONE

Applying sunscreen to a moving target (as in, anyone under the age of 10), is challenging. Here's how to get the situation under control.

■ **Use lotions as your base** They're the most foolproof when it comes to getting an even application on your kids. Applying at home at least 30 minutes before heading out also ups your chances of getting it on thoroughly; you can reapply with sprays, sticks, or wipes when you're out and about.

■ **Begin with blocks** Kids' complexions tend to be more sensitive, so many doctors suggest using a sunscreen with physical rather than chemical filters. Also, kid-specific is OK but not crucial: Any formula that uses physical filters and is labeled "for sensitive skin" should be fine.

■ **Don't rely on sunscreen alone** "Sun-protective clothing is a good insurance plan," Weinkle says, because a swim shirt's protection doesn't degrade. "Two, three hours can fly by when you're having fun, and you forget to reapply sunblock."



EDITOR'S PICKS

We spritzed, slathered, and chose our favorites from the new crop of sunscreens out now. From left: **SPRAY** Alba Botanica Very Emollient Fragrance Free Mineral Sunscreen SPF 35, \$15.99; Whole Foods. **STICK** Banana Boat Kids Sunscreen Stick SPF 50, \$5.99; [drugstore.com](#) **BODY LOTION** Neutrogena CoolDry Sport SPF 50 Lotion Sunscreen, \$10.49; [neutrogena.com](#) **FACE LOTION** Mad Hippie Facial SPF 30+, \$24.99; [madhippie.com](#)

SAFETY PATROL
GET A GOOD MOLE CHECK

A yearly skin exam by a dermatologist is a must, and a thorough one should take 15 minutes or longer, especially if it's your first visit with that doctor. Don't be embarrassed to strip down to your underwear and slip into a gown. It's the only way the doctor can examine every nook and cranny on your back and legs, behind your knees, in your pelvic area, under your arms and breasts. She should also check fingers, around fingernails, your scalp, behind your ears, the bottoms of your feet, and between your toes. A doctor should also check your genital areas for suspicious moles or spots; some dermatologists will do it, others leave it to a gynecologist or urologist.



SUN SENSE

DOES A BASE TAN PROTECT ME FROM BURNING?

Maybe. But it also raises your skin cancer risk. "While a deep tan could theoretically give a very low SPF, it's no guarantee you won't burn," says Elizabeth Tanzi, M.D., a dermatologist in Chevy Chase, Maryland. And the extra color won't protect you from developing skin cancer.

IF IT'S CLOUDY, DO I NEED SUNSCREEN?

Yes. Up to 80 percent of the sun's UV rays break through clouds and fog. UVA rays can also penetrate glass: 53 percent of skin cancers in the United States are diagnosed on the driver's side of the body.

ARE TANNING BEDS EVER A GOOD IDEA?

Never. Using a tanning bed before age 35 ups your risk of melanoma by 75 percent. Using a tanning bed at any age ups your chances of squamous cell carcinoma skin cancer by 67 percent and basal cell carcinoma by 20 percent. Eleven states ban indoor tanning for anyone under 18; the FDA wants to make the ban nationwide and require adults to sign a waiver recognizing that they're exposing themselves to a carcinogen. "Tanning beds are the new cigarettes," Ladd says. ■

"WE'RE SAVING OUR SKIN"

HOW SKIN CANCER CHANGED TWO WOMEN'S SUN HABITS.



JACQUELINE SMITH,
 37, Orlando, Florida

■ **The diagnosis**
 "In my early 20s, I found a lump on my bikini line. I went to a doctor, who said it was just an inflamed lymph node. Two years later it was still there, so I got a second opinion. It was melanoma. A full body check and a PET scan showed that it hadn't spread, but doctors were never able to find the original spot, likely a mole in my

groin. I was shocked; I have dark skin and never thought I was at risk. Six years later, after finding another lump on my bikini line, doctors removed seven cancerous nodes. For five years post-treatment, I went to the dermatologist for a full body check every six months. I've been cancer-free for 10 years and see a dermatologist annually."

■ **How it changed me**
 "Growing up, I never wore sunscreen. Now, I apply sunscreen, moisturizer, and makeup with SPF daily and always seek shade. Also, you must be your own health



LEOPOLDINE GOLUNSKI,
 29, Houston, Texas

■ **The diagnosis**
 "About four years ago, I noticed a small, crusty red spot on my hairline that wasn't going away, so my dermatologist took a look. It was basal cell carcinoma. The doctor removed it, and since then, I've had six more spots

advocate. If I hadn't gone for second opinions, where would I be now?"

removed. I now see my dermatologist up to four times a year and constantly monitor my skin for changes."

■ **How it changed me**
 "As a teenager, I tanned indoors and out. When I see tan teenagers, I want to tell them 'No tan is worth what I'm going through.' When I head outside, my priority is covering up: a big hat, sunglasses, and long sleeves. My car has tinted windows since the cancers were all on my left side. If I'm going to be outside for a long period of time, I always bring a big bottle of SPF 50 sunscreen and reapply religiously."