

The tanned physiques of summer are attractive with their bronzing glows, alluding to health, vitality and somehow a life of luxury. If only it wasn't just a fantasy. Suntanned skin may give off the illusion of health and vitality, but the sun is causing skin trauma. It's actually wounding your skin.

Ever notice how exhausted you feel after laying poolside for an afternoon? When sun hits your skin, it activates melanocytes—pigment-producing cells. Melanocytes are little soldiers who protect you from the sun by releasing a brown color pigment. These little soldiers work for your immune system and after hours of fighting—protecting you from the sun—they get worn out, hence your exhaustion.

This isn't just a summer-time phenomenon. Sunlight is damaging to your skin all year long, whether you're sitting out on a sunny day or walking to work in the fog. In fact, all light, even artificial lighting from lamps, computers, TVs, etc., causes skin damage such as age spots.

Check this out yourself! Do you see a difference between the color of your face, neck and chest and the skin on the rest of your body (the areas that rarely see the sun)? Look closer... do you see a few extra freckles or do you see a v-neck t-shirt line (when you're not wearing one)? Perhaps the areas rarely seen by the sun have more even coloring and seem smoother.

Many people realize the importance of wearing sunscreen when they're laying poolside or at the beach, but wearing it daily is just as important. And it isn't just needed on your face. It's important to treat each area that is exposed the same way. Most commonly this includes the face, neck and chest.

Understanding Sun Protection Labels

When you look at the label of a sun protection product there are a couple things to consider.

1. Is it a combination product? Does it contain sun protection and moisturizer?

Separate is better than combination products. It's best to use separate products for moisturizing and sun protection. Moisturizing is something that happens within the skin and controls water and oil. Sun protection is something that happens on the surface and either reflects or absorbs light.

2. What level of SPF is it? Does it block out both UVAs and UVBs?

The higher the Sun Protection Factor (SPF) number, the higher the percentage of ultraviolet light blocked from damaging your skin. UVA and UVB are types of ultraviolet light found in sunlight. Think of UVAs as 'Aging' and UVBs as 'Burning'. There isn't yet a single standard for indicating the amount of UVAs a product can protect you from. In the US, products are not required to indicate UVA protection, but other countries have started using different scales on their labels. Some products do work to block out both UVAs and UVBs, so check the labels closely. Look for "broad spectrum" or "full spectrum".

The Sun Protection Factor (SPF) number indicates the percentage of UVB light that will be blocked from damaging your skin. For example, SPF 15 indicates that 93% of harmful UVBs will be blocked, where SPF 30 indicates 97%. UV light is harmful to the skin regardless of how high the SPF number. Remember, SPF only indicates the degree of prevention for skin reddening, so avoid excessive exposure.

The higher the SPF number the longer your skin can be exposed without reddening, but it doesn't mean one application will last longer. Sun protection products wipe off as easily as any lotion or makeup. No matter how high the SPF number or whether the product also block UVAs, you'll need to reapply several times a day to ensure your skin is protected.

Applying Sun Protection

1. Avoid combination products—use separate moisturizer and SPF products.
2. Apply your moisturizer 1st and your SPF sun protection product 2nd each morning.
3. Apply to face, neck and chest.
4. For maximum protection, reapply SPF at least 3 times per day to all exposed areas.
5. Wash remaining SPF off your skin before bed.

Long-lasting beauty is something we all want, but it's easily dismissed when we're too tired or late to work. You don't get a second chance with your skin, so we want to help you protect it and keep it looking beautiful for 90+ years!