

We're 'Blocking You

Sunblocking, that is. Nearly 90 percent of people aren't wearing SPF. Criminal! Let these real-women profiles show you how crucial this anti-aging cream really is.

By Karina Giglio



Beauty Buzz

The rules of sunscreen are like the Pledge of Allegiance: Most of us can recite them with our eyes closed. Apply a broad-spectrum SPF 30 each day, rain or shine, no matter your skin tone. But when's the last time you actually acted on them? Only 14 percent of women wear 'screen daily, according to the American Academy of Dermatology. Use a light hand and that SPF 30 can dwarf to a 15 or less.

The consequences aren't pleasant: A study published in the *Annals of Internal Medicine* found that those who skipped sunscreen showed 24 percent more skin aging than those who didn't. And the scary part: Melanoma, the deadliest form of skin cancer, has jumped 3.8 percent every year among women since 1995, per the Melanoma Foundation. Enough!

We interviewed four women about their sunscreen routines and had top derms examine their skin and drop some wisdom, so we can stop and reverse the damage—for all.

Derm Diagnosis

Lindsay has no real sunspots, a few fine crow's-feet, and several forehead grooves. These deeper lines where we have muscle movement are generally caused by expressions, but sun exposure thins the skin, sapping the elastin that keeps it smooth, says Julie Karen, M.D., an assistant clinical professor of dermatology at New York University Langone Medical Center.

Lindsay's natural sunscreen, (1) Badger Unscented SPF 30 Sunscreen Cream (\$16, at Whole Foods), is zinc-based and provides excellent broad-spectrum coverage. Here's where she runs into problems:

While reapplying isn't a huge deal in her daily life because she's almost never outdoors or near windows, it becomes an issue on vacation. "A tan—any amount—is the body's way of responding to injury by darkening to protect itself from further damage," says Karen. "There is no

such thing as a safe tan, no matter how light or how slowly you get it!"

SPF Solution

Don't worry about retinyl palmitate: Yes, it's a vitamin A derivative like all retinoids, but it doesn't irritate your skin like Retin-A can. In fact, it offers antioxidant properties. Still dubious? Use a chemical-free formula with physical blocks, like zinc oxide and titanium dioxide—both are gentle enough for even the most sensitive types. Try (2) Kiss My Face Cool Sport SPF 30 (\$13, at Whole Foods). Lindsay wears an

antioxidant at night, but Karen says morning is the better time. UV and other environmental foes trigger the production of free radicals that chomp away at healthy molecules, leaving your skin vulnerable to a host of issues. "Antioxidants like vitamin C fight free radicals before they can lead to wrinkles, spots, and cancer," says Karen.

For the highest level of protection, apply an antioxidant serum to clean skin, then top with your SPF. Or try an antioxidant-SPF hybrid, like (3) La Roche-Posay Anthelios AOX Daily Antioxidant Serum with Sunscreen SPF 50 (\$42.50, laroche-posay.us).



*The Accidental Sun Soaker

Lindsay Mueller, 27

Lindsay applies an all-natural SPF 30 or higher every morning and a vitamin C serum at night. At the beach, she slathers SPF on her body, too, but doesn't reapply. Though she never burns, she develops color after a few hours. And because she uses Retin-A on her face—which makes skin more sensitive to the sun—she won't use a 'screen that contains any retinoid, including retinyl palmitate, which is found in a number of sunscreens. Hence, she's concerned about whether she's getting adequate protection. "I wonder if my 'hippie' version is doing enough," she says.



Beauty Buzz



*The Outdoor Athlete

Gina Kilpela, 40

Gina runs for an hour at least three days a week in spring and summer. She thinks that isn't enough time for her olive skin to burn and says she

worries sweat is getting trapped in her pores, resulting in breakouts.

Derm Diagnosis

"I showed Gina the smooth inside of her arm and compared it to the skin on her face, where she has enlarged pores, dilated blood vessels, and wrinkles," says Suzan Obagi, M.D., an associate professor of dermatology and plastic surgery at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center. "All that is the direct result of sun damage." (The effects would have been worse had she been fair skinned.) And because Gina has spent so many years not wearing 'screen, if she

continues, her options for reversing the damage will be lasers, peels, Botox, or fillers.

SPF Solution

To prevent your sunscreen from sweating off during outdoor workouts, use two times the protection. Start with a water-resistant stick—the application is precise—on areas that need an extra force field (like dark spots or thin or wrinkly patches). Make three slow, firm strokes. Try (1) MDSolarSciences Mineral Sunscreen Stick SPF 40 (\$18, nordstrom.com). Follow with sunscreen lotion—Obagi suggests high-SPF mineral ones, which degrade more slowly than many chemical ingredients—on the face, neck, and ears. Try (2) Eau Thermale Avène Mineral Hydrating Sunscreen SPF 50 (\$36, at Walgreens). If you choose foot creams—like the two recommended here—that are free of oils, paraffin wax, and liquid paraffin, you shouldn't break out. Midday, wear a hat and UV-protective clothing (check out UVSkinz, uvskinz.com).



*The SPF Skeptic

Charesse James, 25

While Charesse is a beauty junkie (scrubs, masks, oils), her routine lacks one key ingredient: sunscreen (outside of the SPF in her primer and pressed powder). "I have dark skin, so I never thought I needed it," she explains. "Besides, SPF's leave greasy streaks."

Derm Diagnosis

Charesse doesn't have fine lines or true sunspots, but she has areas that are much darker than they should be at her age, says Karen. The culprit: prior skin inflammation made worse by chronic unprotected sun exposure. As Karen explains, any kind of skin injury (a scratch, a pimple) on a woman of color tends to leave a dark spot in its wake—and UV exposure deepens the

hue and slows the rate at which spots fade.

Charesse's make-up-based SPF doesn't cut it. "You're using it only on certain areas, like the T-zone, and rarely in the amount needed to provide the protection stated on the label," says Karen. Plus, SPF refers only to UVB (read: sunburn) protection. This means that UVA rays are still "stimulating melanocytes to produce those spots." (Look for the term *broad spectrum*, which indicates a shield against UVA and UVB.)

Even though melanin naturally provides protection against the sun, that doesn't mean skin cancer can't strike. Plus, those with dark skin may not recognize cancers in their early stage. One study found advanced stages of melanoma at time of diagnosis in 32 percent of African Americans compared with 12 percent of Caucasians.

SPF Solution

So sunscreens "leave greasy streaks," eh? New, effective formulas are now ultralight, thanks to micro-fine particles that look and feel sheer. Choose one labeled *liquid* or *fluid*; the thin consistency absorbs right away, with no pasty stripes. Try (1) Kiehl's Super Fluid UV Defense SPF 50+ (\$38, kiehls.com).

Also, know this: Vitamin D, which the sun emits, helps our bones and immune system to function. Dark complexion has a harder time producing D because extra melanin requires more UV rays to break it—and that means more sun damage. (Cray, no?) Instead of going outside unprotected for your D fix, Karen suggests getting it via D-rich foods (fortified milk, fatty fish) and a multivitamin.



*The Rehabilitated Tan Addict

Jill Percia, 31

Full disclosure: Jill is *WH*'s beauty editor. So it pains her to admit to a history of sun exposure from childhood (she even worked in a tanning salon as a teen...nooooo!). Jill had a moment of enlightenment a year and a half ago when she turned 30 and felt her skin was looking dull. And, she says, "I realized that I was telling readers to use SPF religiously but myself. It made no sense!" Since then, she has been diligent.



Monday through Friday, she spreads a generous layer of broad-spectrum SPF 30 lotion onto her face (she recently graduated from SPF 15) before applying makeup. She then walks 40 minutes to her office. On warmer days, she may get a little dewy from all that strolling, though she never sits near a window and only spends about 15 minutes outside for lunch. On weekends: "I work out in the morning, and I always reapply before leaving the gym because between the sweat and toweeling off, I know there's not much SPF left."

Derm Diagnosis

According to Jill's Visia facial captures (a device that captures photos of skin damage), her aging is more significant than "many patients I've seen

in her age group," says Anne Chapas, M.D., clinical instructor of dermatology at Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai. "She has wrinkles and dark spots that are visible now, and more are lurking under the surface of the skin. Her early history of sun exposure and the fact that she walks to work all contribute to cumulative, ongoing sun damage."

While the past 18 months of consistent SPF use are an excellent start, they can't undo the harm of 30 years of bad sun care. In fact, by age 18, we've acquired about 22 percent of our total lifetime sun exposure. (Yikes!) Each decade, add on another 10 percent.

Plus, derms suggest that the active ingredients in sunscreen can substantially degrade within two hours. When combined with even mild

sweat, oil, and simply touching or wiping your face, it wears away even faster. So while she may be protected during her morning walk, any other time Jill spends outside can impact her already compromised skin. On weekends, her active lifestyle means she needs more than one extra application of sunscreen after her workout, especially if she's running errands or spending time outdoors.

SPF Solution

Jill's taking the right first step: smoothing an even base of sunscreen on her face before leaving the house. (We like (1) Coppertone Clearly Sun SPF 30 (\$9, at drugstores).) Since it's the rare woman who's willing to douse her made-up face with sunscreen every 80 minutes (the ideal time to reapply), Chapas recommends a mineral powder with SPF, like (2) Colorescience Sunforgettable Mineral Sunscreen Brush SPF 30 (\$57, colorescience.com). Dust on an even coat.

To help reverse the spots and wrinkles you've got, DNA-repair enzymes are crucial. UV rays chew up cellular DNA (which is closely linked to skin cancer). Scientific data shows these topical enzymes can reverse sun damage from earlier years and slow down future harm. In fact, a 2010 study in the *Journal of Drugs in Dermatology* found that using a cream with DNA-repair enzymes for 48 weeks significantly reduced actinic keratoses (scaly precancerous growths) in people with severely sun-damaged skin. Try (3) Neova DNA Total Repair (\$99, neova.com). Chapas recommends applying it in the morning as extra protection, under sunscreen. ■



Specific Protection Factor

Another reason your 'screen game should be on point: There's a formula for every sitch or excuse. Shop picks for your exact needs.



1/ Neutrogena CoolDry Sport with MicroMesh SPF 30 (\$9.49, at drugstores) 2/ Kiss My Face Cool Sport SPF 30 Makeup Setting Spray (\$36, sephora.com) 3/ Shiseido Ultimate Sun Protection Cream SPF 50+ WetForce (\$36, shiseido.com) 4/ Bull Frog Deet Free Mosquito Coast Sunscreen with Insect Repellent SPF 30 (\$11, drugstore.com) 5/ Banana Boat SunComfort SPF 30 (\$8, at drugstores)