

SUNSCREEN & SUN HEALTH

PATIENT INFORMATION & INSTRUCTIONS

SUNSCREENS

- Sunscreen products (also called “sunblocks”) should be applied 15-30 minutes prior to sun exposure to be most protective. Sunscreen should be reapplied after prolonged swimming or vigorous activity. Water-resistant sunscreens protect skin for 40 minutes of water exposure and waterproof sunscreens protect for 80 minutes.
- Sunscreen needs to be applied liberally. As much as 1 oz may be needed to cover the entire body. Particular attention needs to be paid to the back of the neck, the ears, and the areas of the scalp with thin hair.
- Use sunscreens with at least a 30 SPF (Sun Protection Factor). Select a broad-spectrum sunscreen that contains ingredients that effectively block both UVB and UVA rays. Such ingredients include avobenzone (Parsol 1789), titanium dioxide and zinc oxide. Sunscreen gels work well on oily skin or when sweating. Sunscreen lotions help dry skin and sunscreen sprays work best on the body. Stick type sunscreens can be used on the lips or around the eyes to avoid eye irritation or for maximal protection of the ears.
- Do not use sunscreen containing the insect repellent DEET, which reduces the SPF of sunscreen. You may have heard that adults need to have exposure to sunlight without protection in order to obtain the amount of vitamin D they need. However, this can be accomplished safely for adults who use sunscreens by taking a daily supplement by mouth of 1000 units of vitamin D3.
- Children are highly susceptible to harmful UV radiation. Just one or two blistering sunburns in childhood may double the risk of developing melanoma (potentially deadly form of skin cancer). Teaching children about sun safety is the key to reducing the risk of future health problems
- Parents should sign a sunscreen permission form for children for daycare. Health care provider instructions are not necessary, except for infants less than 6 months of age. A written authorization from the health care provider is necessary for babies less than 6 months of age to apply sunscreen. However, the American Academy of Pediatrics now advises that sunscreen use on babies less than 6 months old is not harmful on small areas of a baby’s skin, such as the face and back of the hands.
- Sunscreen should not be applied to broken skin or rash. Tell your doctor if your sunscreen seems to be causing a rash, itching, or burning (allergies to sunscreen ingredients can develop in some people).
- Keep in mind, sunscreens are not meant to allow children or adults to spend more time in the sun than they would otherwise. They are meant to protect the skin while you must be in the sun. Sunscreens reduce damage from UV radiation, they don’t eliminate it. Unprotected skin can be damaged by the sun’s UV rays in as little as 15 minutes. Yet it can take up to 12-24 hours for skin to show the full effect of sun exposure.

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SUN SAFE HABITS

- Schedule outdoor activities before 10 am and after 4 pm so that you can avoid being exposed to the most intense and damaging ultraviolet (UV) rays in sunlight.
- Even on cloudy days as much as 80% of UV rays still penetrate the cloud cover. You must protect your skin on cloudy days just as on sunny days.
- Limit exposure to reflected UV rays from surfaces such as: water, concrete, sand, snow, tile, and reflective window glass in buildings.
- The window glass in homes blocks some UV rays, especially the sunburning UV rays (UVB). However, considerable amounts of long wavelength UV rays (UVA) may still pass through such glass. Special UV blocking plastic films that can easily be applied to home window glass are available that block all UV rays (Lumar UV Shield Window Film [1-800-255-8627, llumar.com] or North Solar Screen [1-866-230-4700, northsolarscreen.com]).
- Clothing can be an excellent form of sun protection. Cover up with loose fitting and lightweight clothing (long pants and long sleeved shirt when possible), sunglasses and 4-inch wide brimmed hats. Tightly woven fabric blocks UV rays best. UV protection drops significantly when the fabric becomes wet. Dark colors protect better than light colors. The average white t-shirt provides a SPF (sun protective factor) of only 6-8. Sun protective clothing lines with a rating of SPF 30 or greater are available:
 - Sun Precautions (www.sunprecautions.com)
 - Sun Protective Clothing(www.sunprotectiveclothing.com), Coolibar (www.coolibar.com).

OTHER RESOURCES

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