

SUNSCREEN: YOUR NUMBER-ONE ANTI-AGING ESSENTIAL

THE GOAL OF ANY SUNSCREEN IS TO PROVIDE PROTECTION FROM THE SUN'S UV RAYS. BUT THERE ARE DIFFERENT TYPES OF RAYS AND IT'S IMPORTANT TO KNOW THE KIND OF DAMAGE EACH ONE CAN CAUSE.

NEW SUNSCREEN LABELING

Lately there's been a big push to upgrade sunscreen labeling, and for good reason: Skin cancer rates are skyrocketing. New legislation has proposed the adaptation of a new star-rating system that informs consumers of how well a sunscreen protects against UVA rays, one being the lowest, four being the highest. The current SPF rating system will remain, but the FDA has proposed increasing the maximum SPF from 30+ to 50+, changing "Sun Protection Factor" to "Sunburn Protection Factor," and banning the use of misleading terms like "waterproof" and "sun block" on labels.

WHAT SPF MEANS

SPF REFERS TO A SUNSCREEN'S ABILITY TO PROTECT AGAINST UVB RAYS, THE BURNING RAYS OF THE SUN.

There is currently no rating system for UVA rays, however, look for sunscreens that say "broad spectrum" on the label, because they contain active ingredients that help shield skin from both types of rays. The higher the SPF, the more time you can spend in the sun without burning. But don't think that SPF 30 offers twice the protection of SPF 15. In actuality, SPF 30 only blocks 5 percent more UVB rays than SPF 15, and SPF 50 blocks only one percent more than SPF 30. So what SPF do you need? New York City dermatologist Albert Lefkovits, MD, explains, "The lighter a person's skin, the more protection they need. A blond or redhead with blue eyes should wear SPF 30 or higher." But just because you have darker skin, doesn't mean you don't need protection. "Everyone should use sunscreen on a daily basis, even if they have olive skin and dark eyes," says Dr. Lefkovits.



BASELINE



ONE APPLICATION

LEFT: UV photography without sunscreen. RIGHT: Right side treated with Colorescience Sunforgettable. Darkened area shows sun protection. Images taken with Canfield's Visia technology.

PROPER APPLICATION

THE MAJORITY OF US USE SUNSCREEN INCORRECTLY, LEAVING OURSELVES VULNERABLE TO BAD HEALTH AND BEAUTY CONSEQUENCES.

Problem number one, according to Wheaton, IL, dermatologist Stephanie Marschall, MD, is, "We don't use sun protection 365 days a year from sun-up to sundown, and very few people say, 'I'm going to the grocery store, I better put on sunscreen.'" Always apply a shot-glass worth of sunscreen 30 minutes before heading outside, and reapply often, since the sun itself breaks down the sunscreen over time. And it goes without saying that you should reapply after swimming or excessive sweating—even if your sunscreen says that it's waterproof or sweatproof. Another sunscreen rule of thumb, according to High Point, NC, dermatologist Zoe Draelos, MD, is, "It doesn't work where you don't put it; pay close attention to the ears, under the chin and the back of the neck."

BENEFITS OF THE SUN

WE'RE ALL TOLD THAT UNPROTECTED SUN EXPOSURE IS BAD, BUT DID YOU KNOW THAT OUR BODIES ACTUALLY NEED THE SUN TO PRODUCE VITAMIN D?

There's a lot of debate about unprotected sun exposure and vitamin D synthesis. Dermatologists are on the defense about reports of widespread vitamin D deficiency in the United States and suggestions that unprotected sun exposure is necessary to reduce this risk. Here are a few facts: First, there's no such thing as a true sunblock, so you're still getting some UV exposure when wearing a sun-protection product. Second, vitamin D is added to milk, as well as other fortified foods to help increase our intake. And last, vitamin D supplements are widely available, so most dermatologists agree that it's better to take a pill rather than leave yourself vulnerable to UV rays (and vitamin D is important for calcium absorption, so your bones benefit as well).