

# UV SAFETY

*Confused about the best sunscreen to use?*

*Lawrence E. Gibson, M.D., a dermatologist at Mayo Clinic, Rochester, Minnesota, offers his guidance.*

*Source: MayoClinic.org*

## Focus on the big picture when it comes to sun safety. For Example:

**Avoid the sun during peak hours.** Generally, this is between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. — regardless of season. These are prime hours for exposure to skin-damaging ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun, even on overcast days.

**Wear protective clothing.** This includes pants, shirts with long sleeves, sunglasses and a wide-brimmed hat.

**Use sunscreen.** Apply sunscreen generously and reapply regularly. Research supports the benefits of using sunscreen to minimize skin damage from the sun's rays.

## Understand Sunscreen Options

Here's help understanding sunscreen ingredients, types of sunscreen and more.

✓ **Types of UV Light.** There are two types of UV light that can harm your skin — UVA and UVB. UVA rays can prematurely age your skin, causing wrinkling and age spots. UVB rays can burn your skin. Too much exposure to UVA or UVB rays can cause skin cancer. Broad-spectrum sunscreen offers protection from all UV light.

✓ **Understanding SPF.** SPF stands for sun protection factor, a measure of how well sunscreen protects against UVB rays. (UVA protection isn't rated.) Manufacturers calculate SPF based on how long it takes to sunburn skin that's been treated with the sunscreen as compared to skin with no sunscreen. When applied correctly, a sunscreen with an SPF of 30 will provide slightly more protection from UVB rays than does a sunscreen with an SPF of 15. But the SPF 30 product isn't twice as protective as the SPF 15 product. Sunscreens with SPFs greater than 50 provide only a small increase in UV protection. Also, sunscreen is often

not applied thoroughly or thickly enough, and it can be washed off during swimming or sweating. As a result, even the best sunscreen might be less effective than the SPF number suggests. Rather than looking at a sunscreen's SPF, choose a broad-spectrum sunscreen.

✓ **When you use sunscreen:** Apply generous amounts of sunscreen to dry skin 15 minutes before you go outdoors. Use sunscreen on all skin surfaces that will be exposed to the sun, such as your face, ears, hands, arms and lips. If you don't have much hair on your head, apply sunscreen to the top of your head or wear a hat. Reapply sunscreen every two hours — and immediately after swimming or heavy sweating even if you're using a product that's water resistant. Remember that sand, water and snow reflect sunlight and make it more important to use sunscreen. Since UV light can pass through clouds, use sunscreen even when it's cloudy.

## UV Safety 365

Use sunscreen year-round, but don't let any product lull you into a false sense of security about sun exposure. A combination of shade, clothing, sunscreen and common sense is your best bet.

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