



Sunscreen protection

Anyone can be at risk for sun damage. However, with just simply applying sunscreen to your body, you can reduce your chances of getting skin damage from the sun.

How does sunscreen work?

Sunscreen is a lotion, gel, or spray applied directly to the skin that helps protect you from getting sunburn, wrinkles, and skin cancer. It works by absorbing and/or reflecting ultra violet A (UVA) and ultra violet B (UVB) rays.¹

- UVA rays: are responsible for aging skin. It causes age spots and wrinkles, and can pass through glass windows.¹
- UVB rays: are responsible for causing sunburn and are blocked through glass windows.¹

All sunscreen products have a Sun Protection Factor (SPF) that measures the amount of protection you are receiving, when properly used. The higher the SPF the more protection the sunscreen will provide.

How do you apply sunscreen?

Sunscreen is applied in areas of the skin that are not covered with clothing and are being exposed to the sun. It is best to generously apply sunscreen 20 minutes before going outdoors so that it is fully absorbed into your skin.¹ Water-resistant sunscreen is also available for when you go to the pool or beach. Some sunscreens manufacturers recommend re-applying sunscreen every couple of hours to ensure protection; this may vary with each bottle.

Other sun protectors

Although sunscreen is helpful in protecting your skin for sun damage, it is simply not enough. To thoroughly protect yourself, it is important to:

- **Avoid tanning salons** – artificial tanning exposes you to harmful UV rays.
- **Apply sunscreen before going outdoors** – make sure to choose a sunscreen that has a SPF of 15 or higher. The higher the SPF the greater the protection. Certain sunscreen products have chemicals that may be harmful to your skin. Check with the Environmental Working Group to find the products that are good to use.
- **Take extra caution** when you are near water and sand.
- **Seek shade** – a great way to enjoy outdoors while still being protected for the sun.
- **Wear protective clothing** (hat, long-sleeve shirts, and pants).
- **Wear sunglasses** – protecting your eyes from the sun can help prevent cataracts.

If you follow the proper preventive measures listed above, you will be steps closer to preventing sunburn, aging, eye damage, and skin cancer. If you have any questions or concerns about sun damage or ways to get Vitamin D while still avoiding the sun, talk to your doctor.

For more information visit:

- kp.org/health – learn about sunscreen in the Health Encyclopedia.
- kp.org/succeed – take the Total Health Assessment to learn what your personal safety risk level is.
- www.ewg.org - learn which sunscreens are recommended for protection.

¹ "Action Steps." EPA. Environmental Protection Agency. Web. 05 Mar. 2012. www.epa.gov/sunwise/actionsteps.html.