

“Why should I protect myself from the sun?”

- Sunburns are painful and unattractive
- Only one severe, blistering sunburn increases cancer risk

“But its cloudy outside and I’m going to be in the water...”

- Clouds, water, windows, and snow don’t filter out the sun’s harmful rays
- In fact, you should be more careful around water, sand, and snow due to their ability to reflect the sun’s rays

“So tell me... how can I protect myself from the sun?”

How to treat sunburn

- Cover your skin when outdoors with tightly-woven, loose fitting fabrics
- Cold, damp towel applied for 10-15 minutes a few times a day
- Frequent cool showers
- Apply aloe vera or soy moisturizers.
- Avoid petroleum, benzocaine, or lidocaine containing topicals.
- Hydrate and drink extra water
- If blistering, do not touch the blisters, as it may prevent healing and cause infection
- If you are severely sunburnt (blisters, dizzy, weak, chills/fever, or rapid heartbeat/breathing, or ill-feeling), seek medical help!



(How to not) Burn baby burn: Sun Safety 101

References

1. American Cancer Society. *How do I protect myself from UV rays*. 2014. Retrieved on July 16, 2014 from <http://www.cancer.org/cancer/cancercauses/sunanduvexposure/>
2. American Academy of Dermatology. *Treating Sunburn*. Retrieved on July 16, 2014, from <http://www.aad.org/dermatology-a-to-z/for-kids/about-skin/skin-cancer/treating-sunburn>

Rutgers Health Services
Hurtado Health Center



How does the sun affect you?

The sun exposes you to two types of harmful ultraviolet (UV) radiation.

- **UVA:** primarily causes skin aging and wrinkling; also causes burning and cancer
- **UVB:** more likely to cause burning (“sunburn”) and cancer; also causes skin aging
- Both types of radiation are harmful and one should protect against both.
- The UV index forecast is issued daily by the National Weather Service and EPA. This is a measure of how strong the sun is that day.

How can you properly protect yourself?

Basic means of protection:

- Avoid tanning
- Apply sunscreen appropriately
- Wear long sleeves, pants, hats, and sunglasses
- Avoid the times when the sun is strongest and seek shade between 10am-4pm
- Be extra cautious if you are taking ciprofloxacin, doxycycline, tetracycline, Bactrim, fluconazole, isotretinoin (Accutane), tretinoin (Retin-A), or benzoyl peroxide-containing topicals

What does “SPF” stand for on sunscreen bottles?

- “Sun Protection Factor”
- Ability to block out UVB rays.
- $SPF \geq 15$ is required for minimal protection!
- The fairer your skin is and/or the stronger the UV index is, the higher SPF you will need.

What does “Broad-spectrum” stand for on sunscreen bottles?

- Adequate ability to block UVA rays

Ideally, you should use a sunscreen that has $SPF > 15$ and is broad-spectrum!

When should first apply sunscreen?

- 15-30 minutes before going out

How much is the right amount?

- 4.5 teaspoons (22.5 mL) to cover the whole body

When should you reapply?

Non-water resistant sunscreen

- At least every 2 hours
- Don’t use these types if you sweat a lot or are going to get wet

“Water-resistant” sunscreen

- At least every 40-80 minutes depending on what is indicated on the label.

All brands and formulations with the same SPF and spectrum are interchangeable if applied properly!