“Why should I protect myself from the sun?”

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

“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!

“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?”

References


(How to not) Burn baby burn: Sun Safety 101
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 precautious 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\( \geq 15 \) 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!*