

The Art and Science of Dermatology

Sunscreen

It is important to **wear sunscreen daily, all year round, on exposed skin** (like your face), even when it is cloudy, as one part of a more comprehensive sun-smart lifestyle. It is also important to **limit sun exposure in general** (even with sunscreen on) by seeking shade, avoiding mid-day 10am-4pm sun, and wearing protective clothing such as broad-brim hats, long-sleeve shirts, long pants, and good sunglasses.

UVA light penetrates window glass, so if out in your car, you are out in the sun. Burning and/or tanning (whether from sun or tanning beds; a big no-no), both represent damage to the skin leading to increased risk of skin cancer (that can kill you) and unnecessary photo-aging (causing you to look much older than your actual age).

No tan is a healthy tan. Pale is the new tan! Meticulous sun protection is the number one most important anti-aging plan for your skin.

According to the FDA you should choose a **sunscreen labeled SPF 15 or higher** and **'broad spectrum'**. The label should also state that **'if used as directed with other sun protection measures, this product reduces the risk of skin cancer and early skin aging...'**, per the American Academy of Dermatology (AAD), Dr Allison Divers recommends **SPF 30** even as your daily facial sunscreen for best protection. In order for a sunscreen to meet the most recent FDA guidelines it should also be **water resistant**; however water resistance is not necessarily important for an everyday sunscreen when sweating and water exposure are not happening.

It is important to apply an adequate amount of sunscreen to provide the label-indicated protection, apply it 30 minutes before actual sun exposure, and re-apply every 2 hours and more often if in and out of the water or sweating, etc.

If you are allergic to certain sunscreen ingredients or simply have facial sensitivity and sunscreens burn, itch and/or irritate your face, then you may better tolerate a physical sunscreen containing only titanium dioxide and zinc oxide as the active sunscreen ingredients.

Sunscreen sprays can be flammable so stay away from open flames, sparks, or any ignition source, not only while applying /spraying the sunscreen, but even after it dries on your skin, in order to avoid potential serious burns. Further data is needed to verify efficacy of spray sunscreens compared with typical lotion formulations. There are also safety concerns regarding inhalation.

Adequate **Vitamin D** should be obtained from diet and oral supplementation, and not from increased sun exposure. For more information see the American Academy of Dermatology's position statement on Vitamin D at www.aad.org.