



Share the Wellness Tip

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Share the Wellness: Slick, Stick, Spray or Paste, Slather on the Sunscreen

Showing off the results from your trip to the beach? A tan actually means that the sun's invisible ultraviolet (UV) rays have damaged your skin cells. Two types of UV rays reach the earth. UVA rays can cause wrinkles and age spots. UVB rays can make exposed skin burn. Think A for "age" and B for "burn."

The damage is more than skin-deep. Both types of UV rays can contribute to skin cancer, including melanoma, the deadliest form of skin cancer.

People of all skin colors get skin cancer, so everyone needs to use sunscreen. It should be used every day because the sun emits harmful ultraviolet (UV) rays year-round – rays that can penetrate your skin even on cloudy days. Up to 80 percent of the rays can pass through clouds.

You can do a lot to protect your skin. First of all, be sun-savvy:

- Stay in the shade between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.
- Keep your skin covered and wear a wide-brimmed hat when it's sunny.
- Choose a good sunscreen and apply it every day, 15 to 30 minutes before going outside.
- Use one ounce of sunscreen, an amount that is about equal to the size of your palm.

Sunscreens come in a many forms. The American Academy of Dermatology says that creams are best for dry skin and the face; gels are good for hairy areas such as the scalp or male chest; and sticks work well around the eyes. Parents sometimes prefer sprays because they're easy to use on children.

When choosing sunscreen, look for the following:

- **An SPF of 15 or higher.** The SPF, or sun protection factor, tells you how well the sunscreen protects your skin from burning UVB rays. The higher the SPF, the more UVB protection.
- **Broad-spectrum coverage.** Look for this label to ensure your skin is protected against damaging UVA and UVB light.
- **Water resistance.** With this label, you'll stay protected even while you swim or sweat. But remember to reapply after 40 minutes in the water or after towel drying.

Sources: [The American Academy of Dermatology](#); [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)

