



ASPIRE[®]

DERMATOLOGY

Newsletter: August 2021

Sunscreen Facts and Commonly Asked Questions

Happy Summer! At Aspire Dermatology, we get questions about sunscreen on a daily basis. There is conflicting information about sunscreen safety in the news and it is important to understand the data. We would like to provide you with information that will help you to make the best choices when it comes to protecting your skin. Here are some frequently asked questions from patients along with information from the American Academy of Dermatology (AAD) and the Skin Cancer Foundation.

What is SPF, and is there a difference between SPF 15, 30, or 100?

SPF stands for sunburn protection factor. The sun emits 2 types of rays: UVA and UVB. These are harmful to the skin. UVA rays cause damage that contributes to wrinkles and aging skin. UVB rays are stronger, cause the skin to burn, and damage the DNA skin cells directly. UVB rays are thought to be the cause of most skin cancers, but UVA rays can also contribute to skin cancer. Broad spectrum sunscreen protects the skin from both UVA and UVB damage, and it is recommended for daily use.

The difference in SPF levels is: SPF 15 blocks 93% of UVB rays and SPF 30 blocks 97% of UVB rays. The AAD and Skin Cancer Foundation recommend SPF 30 or higher. There are no sunscreens that can block out 100% of UVB rays; this is the reason we recommend sun protective clothing and hats.



**SPF
30+**



Susan Bordonaro
Dermatology Certified Nurse Practitioner

What is the difference between mineral (physical) and chemical sunscreens?

Mineral sunscreens deflect the sun's rays. Chemical sunscreens protect skin by absorbing the sun's rays. Some prefer the way chemical sunscreens feel on their skin and how it is easily absorbed into the skin. Some, but not all, mineral sunscreens can leave a white residue on the skin. Mineral sunscreens contain zinc oxide and titanium dioxide. Chemical sunscreens can contain oxybenzone or avobenzone. Currently, the FDA is asking manufacturers to look into these and other ingredients to determine if they are safe to use.

Is sunscreen safe to use?

It is important to note that the FDA is not recommending you stop using sunscreen. The recommendation is to look into certain ingredients in some sunscreens to determine if the body absorbs these chemicals and if any absorption of these chemicals could be harmful to the individual using them. Zinc oxide and titanium dioxide are ingredients that are recommended as safe and are found in mineral sunscreens. Some ingredients in chemical sunscreens are being further tested to assess if these ingredients are being absorbed into the body and if they are harmful. Most importantly, based on decades of research and evidence, we know for a fact that the sun's UVA and UVB rays are known to cause cancer. Therefore, it is recommended to continue using sunscreen and sun protective clothing.

I don't lay in the sun or I am not in the sun that often. Do I really need sunscreen?

Remember, you don't have to be lying in the sun on the beach to get sun exposure. The sun is present during cloudy days, rainy days, and winter days. Most people don't realize how much sun they get driving in the car or simply sitting near a window since UVA rays can penetrate windows. We see more skin cancers on the left side of the head, neck, arms, and hands, most likely caused from driving. Use caution near water, snow, and sand as it reflects the damaging rays of the sun. It is recommended to use sunscreen on exposed skin every day, all year long. An easy way to achieve this goal is to apply moisturizer with sunscreen when you are getting dressed in the morning.

How much and how often do I reapply sunscreen?

Sunscreen should be applied 15 minutes before sun exposure. Some sunscreens can take time to absorb into the skin and begin protecting it. In some cases, 15 minutes could be enough time for a person to burn. Reapply sunscreen every 2 hours or sooner if you are sweating or swimming. A few years ago, the FDA removed the label of "waterproof" on sunscreens. Sunscreens can only claim to be water resistant. Sunscreen usually stays on wet skin for 40-80 minutes. If you are going to be in the water for long periods of time, add sun protective clothing such as a rash guard. It takes approximately a shot glass amount of sunscreen to cover sun-exposed areas. I prefer my patients use sunscreens that are lotion or gel forms instead of sprays. It is too easy to miss areas of the skin if you are spraying outdoors due to the wind. However, any sunscreen is better than no sunscreen. Just be sure to work it into the skin to get the best protection. Also of note is that recent recalls of sunscreen have been with spray forms. Remember, just because you don't burn doesn't mean you are not damaging your skin. Skin cancers are the result of an accumulation of sun exposure over an individual's lifetime. Also, tanning booths do not provide a protective "base" coat from burning the skin. Using a tanning booth even one time increases your risk of skin cancer.



How do I protect my baby from the sun?

Parents can start applying sunscreen at 6 months of age. Babies younger than 6 months should not be exposed to the sun. Although “Baby” is used to label some sunscreens, the FDA has not approved this term. Sunscreens that are safe on babies contain zinc oxide and titanium dioxide. These are also less irritating to a baby’s delicate skin. Do your best to keep hats on babies and children, and utilize sun protective clothing.

I need to get Vitamin D, so I don’t wear sunscreen.

Vitamin D has been shown to have many benefits for the immune system and bones. Areas with less sun throughout the year have populations of people with vitamin D deficiencies. The sun is one method of getting vitamin D, and it only requires a very short amount of exposure. Vitamin D can also be obtained through a diet of fatty fish, mushrooms, dairy products, and other foods fortified with vitamin D. Supplementation is another easy method to get vitamin D. Since there are multiple ways to ingest vitamin D, sun exposure is not necessary to prevent deficiency.

Say YES to Sun Protection
Say NO to Skin Cancer

Skin cancer is the most common cancer in the U.S.
One in five Americans will develop skin cancer in their lifetime, and nearly 20 Americans die from melanoma, the deadliest form of skin cancer, every day.

Since exposure to the sun's harmful UV rays is the most preventable risk factor for skin cancer, protect your skin by:

- Seeking shade
- Wearing sun-protective clothing
- Applying sunscreen to all skin not covered by clothing

There are two types of sunscreens:

Physical Sunscreen	Chemical Sunscreen
This sunscreen works like a shield; it sits on the surface of your skin, deflecting the sun's rays.	This sunscreen works as a sponge, absorbing the sun's rays.
Look for the active ingredients zinc oxide and/or titanium dioxide.	Look for one or more of the following active ingredients: oxybenzone, avobenzone, octisalate, octocrylene, homosalate and octinoxate.
Opt for this sunscreen if you have sensitive skin.	This formulation tends to be easier to rub into the skin without leaving a white residue.

If you have concerns about certain sunscreen ingredients, use the information above to choose an alternative that works for you. As long as it's broad-spectrum, water-resistant and has an SPF 30 or higher, it can effectively protect you from the sun. Make sure you reapply it every two hours, or after swimming or sweating.

To learn more about skin cancer prevention and detection, talk to a board-certified dermatologist or visit SpotSkinCancer.org

spot skin cancer

Copyright © by the American Academy of Dermatology and the American Academy of Dermatology Association. All rights reserved.

Bottom line:

Enjoy your life! Spend time outside as much as you would like, just use sunscreen and sun protective clothing to reduce your risk of skin cancer. Additionally, be sure to schedule an annual appointment with Aspire Dermatology for annual skin checks.

Resources to answer your sunscreen questions:

AAD.org

skincancer.org (see poster at the end of this newsletter)

coolibar.com (for sun-protective clothing; there are many more but look for skin cancer foundation seal of approval)

shop.aspiredermatology.com (for a variety of both mineral and chemical sunscreens)



MIDDLETOWN OFFICE	102 Valley Road, Middletown, RI 02842
CUMBERLAND OFFICE	2138 Mendon Road, Suite 201, Cumberland, RI 02864
WARREN OFFICE	851 Main Street, Warren, RI 02885
WARWICK OFFICE	618 Toll Gate Road, Warwick, RI 02886
TIVERTON OFFICE	67 William S. Canning Blvd., Tiverton, RI 02878
JOHNSTON OFFICE	1524 Atwood Avenue, Suite 321, Johnston, RI 02919
RIVERSIDE OFFICE	1525 Wampanoag Trail, Suite 203, Riverside, RI 02915
COVENTRY OFFICE	2435 Nooseneck Hill Road, Suite A-1, Coventry, RI 02816

PHONE: 401.239.1800
aspiredermatology.com

REFERRALS
FAX: 401.239.1791

PATHOLOGY
FAX: 401.239.1795

ACCOUNTS PAYABLE
FAX: 401.239.1797

REFILLS & PRIOR AUTH.
FAX: 401.239.1799

MAIN OFFICE
FAX: 401.239.1801

Say YES to Sun Protection

Say NO to Skin Cancer

Skin cancer is the most common cancer in the U.S.

One in **five** Americans will develop skin cancer in their lifetime, and nearly **20 Americans** die from melanoma, the deadliest form of skin cancer, every day.



Since exposure to the sun's harmful UV rays is the most preventable risk factor for skin cancer, protect your skin by:

- **Seeking shade**
- **Wearing sun-protective clothing**
- **Applying sunscreen to all skin not covered by clothing**



There are two types of sunscreens:



Physical Sunscreen

This sunscreen **works like a shield**; it sits on the surface of your skin, deflecting the sun's rays.

Look for the active ingredients **zinc oxide** and/or **titanium dioxide**.

Opt for this sunscreen if you have **sensitive skin**.



Chemical Sunscreen

This sunscreen **works as a sponge**, absorbing the sun's rays.

Look for one or more of the following active ingredients: **oxybenzone**, **avobenzone**, **octisalate**, **octocrylene**, **homosalate** and **octinoxate**.

This formulation tends to be **easier to rub into** the skin without leaving a white residue.



If you have concerns about certain sunscreen ingredients, use the information above to choose an alternative that works for you. As long as it's **broad-spectrum**, **water-resistant** and has an **SPF 30 or higher**, it can effectively protect you from the sun. Make sure you reapply it every **two hours**, or after swimming or sweating.

To learn more about skin cancer prevention and detection, talk to a board-certified dermatologist or visit [SpotSkinCancer.org](https://www.spotSkinCancer.org).