



➤ Summer travel & sun safety

July

Is your sunscreen really protecting you?

Reading labels is a good idea. But when it comes to sunscreen, labels may not tell you everything you need to know. Even a high-SPF sunscreen might not give you full protection.

Sunscreens were designed to protect us from UVB rays, which cause sunburn. More recently, research has shown that UVA rays can also damage skin. So far, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) doesn't require sunscreens to guard against UVA rays.

When you buy sunscreen, check the label to make sure it screens out both UVB and UVA rays. Also keep these pointers in mind:

- Apply sunscreen 30 minutes before exposure and reapply at least every two hours
- If you're fair-skinned, apply sunscreen more often
- Remember that swimming, sweating and towel drying can remove sunscreen, so you may need to reapply
- Keep in mind that no sunscreen can guarantee protection for a certain number of hours or all day

Sources: www.oeconline.org and www.cancer.org

What's your risk for skin damage from UV rays?

We all look forward to spending time in the sun, but no one wants to end up looking like a cooked lobster. As you plan your summer adventures, don't forget about sun protection.

Whether your skin is fair or dark, it can be affected by the sun's UV rays. UV rays increase the activity of the cells that make the skin pigment melanin — which results in tanning. Some dermatologists believe that any tanning is a sign of skin damage.

Melanin helps block damaging UV rays to a certain point. That's why people with darker skin are less likely to get sunburned, and people with fair skin burn more easily. Sunburns increase your risk of skin cancer, including the most serious kind, melanoma. But remember that UV exposure can raise that risk even if you don't get sunburned.

Sunglasses: Look cool and be safe

Are your sunglasses a fashion statement? Whether they are or not, wear them to protect your eyes from the sun. The sun's UV rays can hurt your eyes any time of year, even on overcast days. The damage adds up over your lifetime, and it can lead to vision problems like cataracts.

Before you buy sunglasses, here are some things to consider:

- Choose sunglasses that block 100 percent of UVA and UVB rays
- Green, brown or gray lenses are best
- Bigger is better
- Wraparound styles can block rays that sneak in from the side
- Wearing a hat with your shades gives you even more protection

Make your sunglasses a daily habit. Even kids who spend much time outdoors should protect their eyes from UV rays.

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