

THE DARK SIDE OF TANNING

Mayo Clinic in Scottsdale Presents Ten Tips about Sunscreens

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Judging from the number of people soaking up the rays at the beach, pool or tanning salons, many Americans still associate a tan with health and fitness. But did you know that a tan is actually your body's attempt to protect itself from the sun's damaging rays? Face it, there's no such thing as a healthy tan.

The dangers of getting too much sun are well documented and include sunburn, premature wrinkling and an increased risk of skin cancer. More than one million new cases of skin cancer will be diagnosed in the U.S. this year.

At this rate, one in 87 Americans has a lifetime risk of developing melanoma, the most deadly type of skin cancer, according to the American Academy of Dermatology.

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You don't have to stay in a cave

You can still get out and have an active and healthy life, but you need to be sun-smart. Wear sun-protective clothing, a wide-brimmed hat, and a broad spectrum sunscreen that protects from ultraviolet A (UVA) and ultraviolet B (UVB) sunlight. And save outdoor activities for the early morning or late afternoon, avoiding the period from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. if possible.

Ten tips about sunscreens that you may not know:

- Sunscreens should be applied 15-30 minutes BEFORE going

outdoors, and need to be re-applied every two hours.

- If you're swimming or perspiring heavily, apply sunscreen more often since it loses its effectiveness after 80 minutes if you're in the water.
- You need to use one ounce – enough to fill a shot glass with sunscreen – to cover all the exposed areas of your body properly.
- SPF refers to Sun Protection Factor. It compares the amount of time it takes to cause a burn on sunscreen-protected skin versus on unprotected skin. Use SPF 15 or higher.
- Don't forget your lips. Use a lip balm with SPF of 15 or higher.
- Sunscreens should be used every day, year-round, if you're going to be in the sun for more than 20 minutes. Sun damage can occur on cloudy days, too.
- Applying sunscreen to exposed areas should become a part of your routine, just like brushing your teeth.
- Protect your eyes by wearing sunglasses with at least 99 percent protection against both UVA and UVB sunlight.
- Selecting a sunscreen can be confusing because there are many types and ingredients to consider. Consult a health-information website such as www.aad.com from the American Academy of Dermatology if you need help.
- Sunscreen alone doesn't protect you from skin cancer, so don't assume it's safe to stay in the sun just because you're wearing it.