

# SUNSCREEN 101

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT CHOOSING A SAFE AND EFFECTIVE SUNSCREEN

## DOES A PRODUCT STILL WORK AFTER ITS EXPIRY DATE?

Sunscreens contain chemicals that eventually break down, compromising the effectiveness of the product, so you should not use a sunscreen after its expiry date. Also, sunscreens are often kept in hot temperatures - in the glove compartment of a car or in a beach bag - conditions which accelerate the deterioration of the product.

## HOW LONG DO I NEED TO WAIT AFTER APPLYING SUNSCREEN BEFORE GOING OUTSIDE?

Despite popular belief, sunscreen starts working immediately after applying them! Just don't jump right into the water or they may wash off: give them 15 minutes to "set" on your skin first.

## ARE SUNSCREENS SAFE?

The safety of UV filters has been shown in an extensive program of toxicological studies. The benefits of sunscreen preventing skin cancer and aging have been well-studied, and proven in large scientific medical studies of people in Australia followed for over 10 years.

## WHAT ARE SUNSCREENS?

Sunscreens are barriers which are applied to the skin. They work by absorbing or reflecting some of the sun's ultraviolet radiation (UVR). Sunscreens come in a wide variety of forms - creams, lotions, sprays, gels, and sticks - and there are many brands to choose from.

## CHEMICAL VS. MINERAL

All approved sunscreens contain active ingredients called "filters" that absorb part of the UV radiation produced by the sun. Organic filters used in "chemical" sunscreens absorb UV radiation. Inorganic filters used in "mineral" or "physical" sunscreens attenuate UV mainly by absorption as well, but also by some scattering of light (e.g. zinc oxide, titanium dioxide).

## WHAT SUNSCREENS ARE RECOMMENDED FOR SENSITIVE SKIN?

If you have sensitive skin, try a small amount of the product on your arm and check for any reaction up to 48 hours later. People intolerant to sunscreens should look for products labelled "mineral" or "physical" or "chemical-free". These usually contain ingredients such as titanium dioxide and zinc oxide. Fragrance-free sunscreens are also recommended for those with sensitive skin.

## WHAT DOES SPF MEAN?

All sunscreens are labelled with a sun protection factor (SPF) number. This relates to the amount of time it takes for your skin to burn without any protection, and how long it would take if you used the appropriate amount of sunscreen. An SPF is the ratio between the amount of UVR that will cause sunburn in sunscreen-protected skin, compared to unprotected skin. Sunscreens should not be used to extend the amount of time you would usually spend in the sun. Sunscreens should be used with other forms of sun protection, such as shade, hats, clothing, and sunglasses, to protect you as much as possible.

## DO I NEED TO WEAR SUNSCREEN ALL YEAR?

In Canada, you should wear sunscreen every day from April to September when the UV Index is consistently above 3. It is a good idea to consider wearing daily sunscreen in the winter on exposed sites when outdoors. You should always protect yourself from the sun from 11 am to 3 pm from late spring to early fall and during winter.

The sun is stronger at the equator and at higher altitudes where the thinner atmosphere blocks less UV radiation. The damaging effects of direct exposure to the sun can be increased if there is reflection from snow, water, and light-coloured sand. Snow reflects up to 80 percent of the sun's UVR - so you could be getting a double dose of radiation when involved in winter sports.

## HOW DO I CHOOSE A SUNSCREEN?

Look for a product with a minimum SPF of 30 labelled "broad spectrum" to protect against both ultraviolet B (UVB) and ultraviolet A (UVA).

## IS IT WORTH BUYING A SPORT SUNSCREEN?

Some sunscreens are labelled "sport" have been specially formulated to stay on the skin during heavy perspiration and some are designed for better grip (less slippery on the hands).

## LOOK FOR THE LOGO

Look for the Canadian Dermatology Association (CDA) logo on products to ensure the safety and effectiveness of the sunscreen. CDA Expert Advisory Board recognized products meet the following criteria:

- ✓ Broad-spectrum with an SPF of 30 or higher
- ✓ Non-irritating and hypo-allergenic
- ✓ Minimally perfumed or non-perfumed
- ✓ Non-comedogenic

## HOW MUCH TO APPLY?

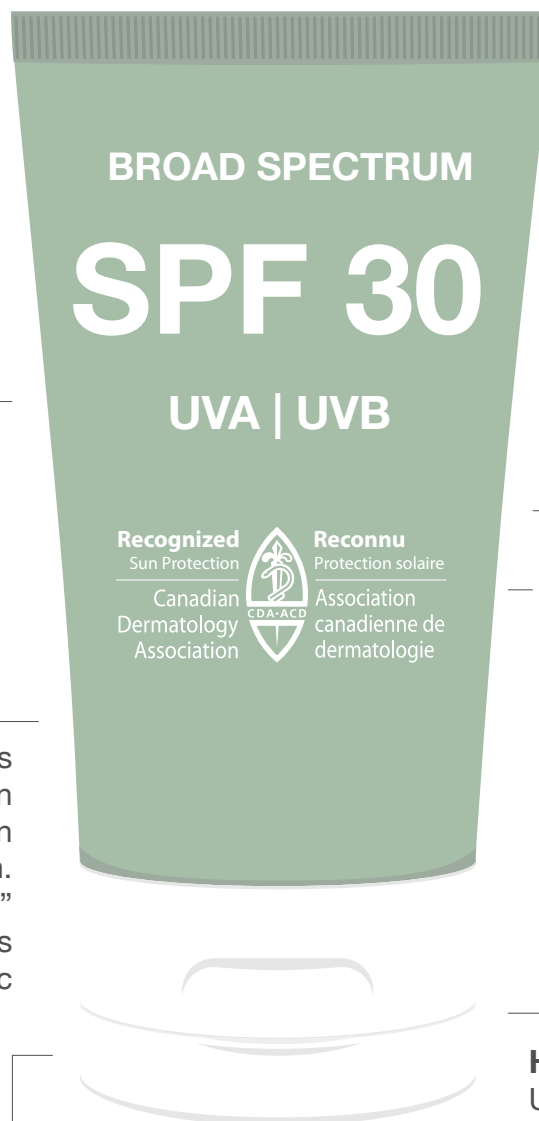
Use a generous amount of sunscreen (the average adult requires approximately two to three tablespoons of lotion-formulated sunscreen to cover the whole body, and a teaspoon to cover the face and neck). Studies show most people only apply 1/4-1/2 the amount of sunscreen they need to achieve the SPF number on the sunscreen bottle, so be generous!

## WHAT IS UVA & UVB?

UVB is a shorter wavelength of light that affects the top layers of the skin and cause sunburns, tanning, and skin cancer. This explains why it is never safe to "tan", as the same wavelengths of light that cause tanning also cause skin cancer. Ultraviolet A (UVA) radiation penetrates more deeply into the skin and is responsible for premature aging, and can contribute to the development of skin cancer.

## WHEN DO YOU NEED TO REAPPLY SUNSCREEN?

Apply sunscreen generously and reapply after swimming, strenuous exercise, or toweling off.



THE CANADIAN DERMATOLOGY ASSOCIATION SUPPORTS THE USE OF SUNSCREEN AS AN EFFECTIVE AND SAFE MEANS TO PROVIDE PROTECTION FROM THE SUN'S HARMFUL RAYS. THERE IS STRONG SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE OF THE ADVERSE EFFECTS OF UV EXPOSURE. SEEKING SHADE, WEARING PROTECTIVE CLOTHING AND SUNGLASSES, AND USING A BROAD SPECTRUM SUNSCREEN ALL HELP IN PROVIDING SAFE SUN PROTECTION.