



Sunscreen 101: What You Need to Know

Sunscreen should be part of your everyday routine – brush your teeth, take a shower, put on sunscreen. We know that adding sunscreen to your routine can be challenging, especially with so many products on the market. Here’s what to look for when you are out shopping for another bottle:

What is SPF?

Sun Protection Factor – SPF – refers to the ability of a product to block the sun’s harmful rays from penetrating your skin and causing sun damage and sunburns. We suggest using an SPF 30 (or higher), to block nearly 97 percent of the sun’s rays.

What should I look for in an SPF?

- Acquire a “broad-spectrum” SPF. The broad spectrum protects you from both UVA and UVB rays:
 - UVA rays primarily cause skin aging and wrinkling
 - UVB rays play a key role in the development of skin cancer
- Make sure it’s water resistant for 40 to 80 minutes
- Use SPF 30 or higher



Dana-Farber conducts [free sun safety screenings](#) every summer at local beaches.

Are there different types of sunscreen?

Yes, there are two types of sunscreen – “physical” and “chemical.”

What are the differences?

Physical sunscreen contains natural minerals such as zinc oxide and titanium dioxide. These protect against UVA and UVB rays. Typically, these products can be thick, and depending on the brand they can leave a white sheen on one's skin.

Chemical sunscreen contains synthetic ingredients such as oxybenzone, avobenzone, octisalate, octocrylene, homosalate, and octinoxate. These ingredients also protect against UVA and UVB rays and are easily absorbed into the skin.

Which product is better?

Which product you select is a personal choice. Some folks may be concerned with synthetic chemicals and opt for a physical sunscreen. Others may be concerned more with price point and will purchase a chemical sunscreen. Whichever your preference, it's important to always have sunscreen on hand.

What else do I need to know?

- Apply sunscreen every day. *Yes, we mean every day!*
- Put it on 15 minutes before you leave the house.
- Use about one ounce of sunscreen for exposed body areas (adjust to body size, of course).
- Reapply every two hours.
- Use a lip balm with SPF 15.
- While sunscreen works well, be sure to also use a wide-brimmed hat and sunglasses for extra protection.