



SUNSCREENS

The purpose of sunscreen is to prevent skin cancer and photoaging (early aging of the skin due to the sun). Sunscreen blocks sunlight that can damage the skin; this light is called ultraviolet radiation. Ultraviolet radiation is made up of UVA (longer wavelengths—*photoaging rays*) and UVB (shorter wavelengths—*sunburn rays*). Both UVA and UVB are important in both skin cancer and photoaging.

Physical sunscreens (mineral): Block ultraviolet radiation

- Ingredients to look for: zinc oxide (15-20%) and/or titanium dioxide.
- Mineral sunscreens can be made with very small ingredients called “nanoparticles” which have not been proven to be harmful, but patients may prefer sunscreen without these particles called “non-nano” sunscreens.

Chemical sunscreens: Absorb and reflect ultraviolet radiation

- Ingredients to look for: oxybenzone, avobenzone, octisalate, octocrylene, homosalate, and/or octinoxate.
- Many are absorbed through the skin; it is unclear if this is harmful.



Tinted sunscreens:

- Physical or chemical sunscreens may have “tinted” substances added (usually iron oxides) that decrease whitish cast (ashiness), blend better with skin color, and/or hide blemishes.
- Tinted sunscreens also protect against visible light—this can play a role in skin disorders that lead to increased darkening of the skin (called hyperpigmentation).
- When shopping for a tinted sunscreen, look for products containing iron oxides and at least 15% to 20% zinc.

AVOID spray sunscreens as these are more likely to contain harmful chemical contaminants.



SPF (Sun Protection Factor):

- SPF stands for “sun protection factor” and refers only to protection from UVB rays.
- In general, dermatologists recommend an SPF of at least 30 which blocks 97% of UVB rays.



Applying Sunscreen:

- Most adults need about **1 ounce (2 tablespoons)** of sunscreen to fully cover the body.
- Apply to your entire exposed body surface including the tops of your feet, neck, ears, and the top of your head (if you do not have hair). Wear hats and protective clothing when possible.
- Apply sunscreen to dry skin and wait **15 minutes** before going outdoors.
- When outdoors, reapply about every **2 hours** or after getting wet. Some sunscreens are water resistant (stay on in water), but none are fully waterproof.
- Skin cancer can form on lips so it is also important to apply a lip sunscreen (usually in stick form).



Protective clothing and shade-seeking behavior

- Hats (broad-brim) and sun protective swim shirts are highly recommended.
- Shade-seeking behavior is highly recommended but is not sufficient.
- Ultraviolet radiation is greatest between 10:00 AM and 3:00 PM, but there is still plenty of ultraviolet radiation beyond these hours, particularly UVA.



Sunscreen recommendations for specific skin types

- **Darker skin color:** tinted sunscreens can help reduce “white cast” that can be common in many sunscreens.
- **Hyperpigmented skin disorders:** tinted sunscreens can block visible light and also mask this.
- **Sensitive skin:** physical sunscreens are generally better tolerated than chemical sunscreens.
- **Oily and/or acne-prone skin:** non-greasy formulations that absorb quickly (liquid, gel, powder).
- **Allergy to sunscreen:** Try a physical sunscreen (chemical sunscreens may be allergens) and contact your dermatologist.

Sunscreen Recommendations for Darker Skin			
Sunscreen	Type	Tinted	SPF
COTZ flawless complexion	Mineral	Yes—2 shades	50
Neutrogena UV Mineral Tint	Mineral	Yes—4 shades	30
Black girl sunscreen Make it hybrid	Chemical/Mineral	No	50
ElaMD UV clear	Chemical/Mineral	No	46
All Good Tinted	Mineral	Yes	30
MD Mineral BB Crème (SolarSciences)	Mineral	Yes—4 shades	50

Sunscreen Recommendations for Lighter Skin			
Sunscreen	Type	Tinted	SPF
COTZ flawless complexion	Mineral	Yes	50
Baby Bum/Sun Bum mineral	Mineral	No	50
CeraVe Hydrating Mineral	Mineral	No	50
CeraVe Sheer Tint	Mineral	Yes	30
Vanicream Sunscreen	Mineral	No	50
ElaMD (many products)	Mixed	Some tinted	30-50
All Good or Badger	Mineral	Some tinted	30-50
Neutrogena UV Mineral Tint	Mineral	Yes—4 shades	30