

Sunscreen Recommendations

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It is important to remember that sunscreens should be used *in addition* to other forms of sun protection. While sunscreens do help to decrease the amount of damage to your skin, protecting your skin by wearing long-sleeved clothing and hats, as well as avoiding the sun between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., is just as important.

There are several companies that make specialized clothing and hats (available at outdoor/sporting goods stores or online) that provide much better protection than regular clothing. When selecting a hat, avoid baseball caps and straw hats; instead, select a hat with a full, wide brim and a tight weave.

Sun Protection Factor (SPF) is an indicator of how well the sunscreen protects your skin against the sun's **UVB** rays, which cause sunburn and skin cancers. For most patients, an **SPF of 30 or higher** is adequate. Remember that the protection will not be adequate unless the sunscreen is applied evenly over all exposed skin before going out in the sun. Sprays are never as good as creams, lotions, or gels and are not recommended for use on the face.

Most sunscreens contain multiple active ingredients; these will be listed on the bottle. Make sure that the sunscreen contains an effective **UVA** blocker since the sun's UVA rays also cause skin cancers as well as aging of the skin. The most effective UVA blockers are **titanium dioxide**, **zinc oxide**, and **Parsol 1789** (sometimes listed as avobenzone).

A sunscreen labeled as **sweatproof** has been clinically proven to maintain efficacy despite moderate sweating. Such sunscreens tend to resist rubbing off or getting into your eyes. Those listed as **waterproof/water resistant** have been clinically proven to maintain efficacy during or after exposure to water. Sunscreens should still be re-applied every two hours even if they are sweatproof or waterproof.

Oil-free sunscreens will feel less greasy. They are especially recommended for patients who have oily skin. Sunscreens labeled as **non-comedogenic** are designed for acne-prone patients since these sunscreens have less of a tendency to clog pores.

Keep in mind that a sunscreen's brand name, cost, or "dermatologist recommended" label has little to do with its effectiveness. The preceding guidelines and your personal preference regarding how the sunscreen feels and performs are the most important factors.