

# DERMATOLOGISTS ADVISE HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF FROM SUN

## Q&A

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Sunscreen is key to protecting your skin against the sun's harmful rays that can cause skin cancer. But which kind should you use and how often should you apply it? And is there a difference between SPF 15, 50 and 100? Newsday asked local dermatologists to help sort it out.

### Why is it important to wear sunscreen?

Ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun causes the formation of free radicals that can damage skin at the cellular or DNA level, said Dr. Navin Arora, a dermatologist and medical director of Borealis Dermatology in Garden City and Syosset. UV exposure can cause early signs of aging such as wrinkles and sun spots, as well as skin cancer. Sunblock can prevent the effects of chronic UV exposure, he said.

### What are the different types of sunscreen?

There is physical sunscreen and chemical sunscreen, explained Dr. Raman Madan, director of cosmetic dermatology at Northwell Health, who sees patients in Huntington and New Hyde Park. "Physical sunscreen has titanium dioxide or zinc oxide in it and that protects you by physically blocking the sun from touching your skin," he said. "Chemical

sun-screen goes into your skin and prevents any UV damage when the sun hits your skin."

### How often should you apply and reapply sunscreen?

You should apply it at least every two hours and even more when you are swimming and going into the water, Madan said.

Arora suggests putting on sunscreen at home, before you get to the beach or the pool, to give it time to absorb before your sun exposure. "People think 'Oh, I'm at the beach. Let me put it on now' but you have this 30-to 45-minute window where it hasn't fully absorbed and now you are really susceptible."

### What SPF sunscreen should you use? Is a higher SPF better to use?

SPF 30 and above is fine, Madan said. "SPF 30 protects you from 97% of the sun, SPF 50 is 98% and SPF 100 is close to 99%," he said. "I'm OK with people using the SPF 30 because it's still giving you a lot of protection and usually it goes on a little bit lighter than SPF 100."

"It's really how much do you apply, how often do you apply," Arora said. "Those are the more important characteristics of the sunblock rather than sometimes the numbers beyond 30 SPF or 50 SPF."



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*Sunscreen should be applied every two hours, sooner if you go into the water, experts said.*

### What else can I do to protect myself from the sun?

"Avoid peak hours, the sun is strongest between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.," Madan said. "There is clothing with SPF built into it, which I use with my kids. And wear a hat and sunglasses. All those things make a big, big difference."