



Even if you use a sunscreen with a very high SPF, this doesn't mean you can stay out in the sun longer, use less sunscreen, or apply it less often. **Again, always be sure to read the label.**

## **How to put on sunscreen**

**with sun protection factor (SPF) values of 30 or higher.**

Some sunscreen products can irritate the skin. Some labels may provide information about how to test for skin irritation or sensitivity. If your skin becomes irritated, contact your doctor or a dermatologist for ideas about which type or brand might be best for you.

**What does SPF mean?**

The SPF number is the level of protection the sunscreen provides against UVB rays, which are the main cause of sunburn.

- Sunscreens labeled with SPFs as high as 100+ are available.
- In the US, sunscreens with an SPF lower than 15 must include a warning on the label stating that the product has been shown only to help prevent sunburn, not skin cancer or early skin aging.
- A higher SPF number means more UVB protection.

When applying sunscreen correctly, you get the equivalent of 1 minute of UVB rays for a certain amount of time you spend in the sun. The amount of time is based on the SPF level of the product. For example, a sunscreen with SPF 30 gives the equivalent of 1 minute of UVB rays for each 30 minutes you spend in the sun. This means 1 hour in the sun wearing SPF 30 sunscreen is the same as spending 2 minutes in the sun totally unprotected. Higher SPF numbers do mean more protection, but the higher you go, the smaller the difference becomes.

- SPF 15 sunscreens filter out about 93% of UVB rays
- SPF 30 sunscreens filter out about 97%
- SPF 50 sunscreens filter out about 98%
- SPF 100 filter out about 99%.

**Broad spectrum sunscreen**

Sunscreen products can only be labeled “broad spectrum” if they have been tested and shown to protect against both UVA and UVB rays. Sunscreens that help protect against UVA rays might include avobenzone (Parsol 1789), zinc oxide, and titanium dioxide.

Only broad spectrum sunscreen products with an SPF of 15 or higher can state that they help protect against skin cancer and early skin aging if used as directed with other

sun protection measures.

### **Water resistant sunscreen**

Sunscreens cannot be labeled as “waterproof” or “sweatproof” because these terms can be misleading. Sunscreens can claim to be “water resistant,” but they have to state whether they protect the skin for 40 or 80 minutes of swimming or sweating, based on testing.

### **Expiration dates**

Not all sunscreen stays on your skin when it is applied. Swimming, showering, and sweating can cause sunscreen to wash off and go into waterways. Scientists have found that certain chemicals in some sunscreen products can harm coral reefs and other organisms in bodies of water.

Mineral sunscreen is a good option since it does not use the types of chemicals that can be harmful to marine life. Additionally, wearing UV protective clothing is a good option for protecting your skin when there is concern about sunscreen ingredients being harmful during water activities.

## References

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