

Having had a blistering sunburn as a child more than doubles your chances of getting skin cancer; being careful now makes a big difference!



# Hello, healthy, beautiful skin

Sunscreen does amazing things for your complexion, above and beyond preventing you from getting scorched. “If your skin isn’t constantly fighting off UV rays and free radicals, it can actually have the leeway to repair itself and reverse past damage,” says Leslie Baumann, M.D., a dermatologist in Miami Beach. “Put sunscreen on daily and you’ll look younger over time.” Add *that* to your list of reasons to make an SPF effort. By Alyssa Kolsky Hertzig

## The absolute least you can do to protect yourself

Keep these simple rules in mind before you shell out money for a sunscreen.

**1 Look for the term *broad-spectrum* or UVA/UVB protection** on the label. The familiar SPF number isn’t enough, because it refers only to protection against UVB rays (the ones responsible for burning skin); you need a sunscreen that also fends off at least some UVA rays (which don’t burn but can break down collagen and age skin). It pays to make sure that’s spelled out: The *Archives of Dermatology* reports that of 29 popular moisturizers that touted an SPF and *broad-spectrum* on the label, only six offered adequate UVA protection.



Try: Avon Anew Solar Advance Sunscreen Body Lotion SPF 30, \$34

**2 Read the fine print.** Once you’ve found a broad-spectrum sunscreen, you need to narrow your search even further, as the term doesn’t guarantee that every UVA wavelength is covered. “So you might diligently apply but still see premature aging,” says Steven Q. Wang, M.D., director of dermatology at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in Basking Ridge, New Jersey. To be sure, look for a mix of avobenzene and octocrylene (found in any of the sunscreens here) or 5 to 10 percent zinc oxide.



Try: MDSolarSciences No Touch Body Spray SPF 40, \$21

**3 Crunch the numbers.** You may think that a daily moisturizer with SPF 15 is adequate if all you’ll be doing is heading to the office and running errands during lunch. And, true, it’s better than nothing. But the American Academy of Dermatology now recommends bumping that up to an SPF 30 for daily use; if you’ll be in the sun for an extended period, a moisturizer or sunscreen with SPF 50 is ideal. Don’t forget the broad-spectrum protection and reapply often, especially after breaking a sweat or taking a swim.



Try: Origins A Perfect World UV Face Protector SPF 35, \$28



## Got skin issues?

Sunscreen may be the solution.

**Banish breakouts.** Convinced that (a) sunscreen will clog your pores and lead to zits, and (b) the sun has magical pimple-drying powers? Wrong. As long as you stick with oil-free sunscreens (and especially avoid formulas with mineral oil, paraffin wax, liquid paraffin or petrolatum), your breakouts shouldn't increase at all, says Howard Sobel, M.D., a dermatologist in New York City. In fact, they could *decrease* if you try a sunscreen with zit-fighting 2 percent salicylic acid. As for the sun clearing acne by drying up oil, again, no dice. "It might seem as if your pimples vanish following a day at the beach, but your skin will eventually react to the UV damage by producing more sebum, which clogs pores and fuels the pimple cycle," Dr. Sobel says. A better idea: Instead of relying on the sun to combat pimples, cover (and heal) them with a mineral-based powder; the minerals have inherent bacteria-fighting qualities and deflect UV rays.

**TRY** Physicians Formula Mineral Wear Airbrushing Loose Powder SPF 30, \$14 (top).

### Ease dry or sensitive skin.

Opt for creamy formulas packed with hydrators such as oat protein or sodium hyaluronate (the latter attracts water from the air and binds it to skin) along with omega-3s, essential fatty acids that are also deeply moisturizing. To further seal in moisture, apply when skin is a bit damp, Dr. Sobel says. Prone to mystery rashes? Use formulas that contain titanium dioxide and zinc oxide—physical protectors that deflect UV light and are less apt to be irritating. They can leave a white sheen on skin, though, so dab lightly on your face, then rub in completely (rather than pouring a blob in your hands).

**TRY** Aveeno Natural Protection Sunblock Lotion SPF 30, \$10.

**Erase lines and wrinkles.** Look for a sunscreen laced with antioxidants such as vitamins E and C, caffeine, coffeeberry or niacin. "Antioxidants fight free radicals before they lead to wrinkles and cancer," says Fredric Brandt, M.D., a dermatologist in NYC and Miami. For the highest level of protection, apply a separate antioxidant serum to skin first; serums are ultra-thin and designed to penetrate deeply into skin. (SELF likes Dr. Stanley Jacobs Visco-Elastic Transforming Serum, \$120.) Then layer a souped-up sunscreen on top.

**TRY** StriVectin-SH Age Protect SPF 30, \$49.



Don't let rays peek through. Instead of a hat with holes like this one, wear one with UPF (aka SPF for fabric). SELF likes the Mott 50 Billy hat. \$65; Mott50.com

## Test your sunscreen smarts

Now that you know your UVAs from your UVBs, gauge your knowledge of the trickier stuff—and stay safe.

### Is it possible to pop a sun protection pill?

Sort of. Heliocare's sun protection pill (\$50 for 60 pills) is an antioxidant-rich supplement that helps fight sun-induced inflammation. "But it can't take the place of sunscreen," says Ellen Marmur, M.D., chief of dermatology and cosmetic surgery at the Mount Sinai Medical Center.

### Can sunscreen cause cancer?

No—it prevents it. Despite findings that suggest some sunscreen ingredients spurred cancer growth in lab animals, sunscreens are safe, "based on critical analyses of the animal study, data in humans and all the evidence we have," says Henry W. Lim, M.D., chairman of the department of dermatology at Henry Ford Hospital.

### Are "natural" sunscreens truly free of chemicals?

Sunscreens with physical blockers—like zinc oxide—are generally thought of as natural because they come from minerals; those made with avobenzone are officially classified as "chemical." The truth: Zinc oxide and titanium dioxide are put through a chemical process before they end up in the bottle, so they aren't totally natural, either.

## Think you're protected?

Three reasons you could be sun-vulnerable

- 1 **You're on oral or topical medications.** Even if you wear sunscreen, certain antibiotics for treating acne and urinary tract infections, as well as isotretinoin (aka Accutane), some blood pressure meds and sulfur creams can all leave you fried. That's because "some drugs break into tiny particles when they penetrate skin or enter the bloodstream; these can react with UV rays and cause a burn," Dr. Marmur says. Vacationing in the sun? Ask your doctor if you could temporarily stop taking your Rx about two weeks before you go, to minimize your chances of getting scorched.
- 2 **You're on hormones or you're pregnant (or trying to be).** The Pill and some hormone regimens (e.g., those for infertility treatments) can cause melasma, a type of sun-induced pigmentation. (See page 168 for the 411 on how to lighten these and other spots.)
- 3 **You have a health condition.** Certain autoimmune diseases (such as lupus) can increase vulnerability to sun rashes. Some folks also have a sun allergy, aka polymorphous light eruption, in which a rash arises after even intermittent UV exposure. Stay in the shade!



Up to 90 percent of visible signs of skin aging—fine lines, dark spots and even rough texture—are the result of sun exposure, according to the Skin Cancer Foundation.



Neutrogena Healthy Skin Custom Glow Bronzer in Sunset Glow, \$13

Givenchy Mister Radiant Made To Measure Glow, \$36

L'Oréal Paris Sublime Bronze Clear Self-Tanning Gel, \$11

## Still want to get your glow on?

Go right ahead—as long as the color is faux. Research shows that using a tanning bed before age 30 heightens your risk for melanoma by a shocking 75 percent. Learn how to fake it beautifully.

**To get a hint of color** Use a gradual self-tanner, particularly if you're fair-skinned or a self-tanner virgin or you don't want to risk streaks. For one thing, it's pretty tough to mess up. And because it's simply body moisturizer mixed with a small amount of DHA (the sugar-based compound that combines with skin's amino acids to create a darker shade), it lets you build color gradually and easily. (SELF loves Jergens Natural Glow Express Body Moisturizer, \$9.)

**To get tan instantly** Not the patient type? Reach for a gel or cream wash-off bronzer and apply only to exposed skin (on your face in place of foundation, your legs in a mini or your chest in a low-cut tee). Use sparingly for sheer, golden color, says Anna Stankiewicz, a tanning guru at Suvara at the Warren-Tricomi Salon at The Plaza Hotel in NYC, who keeps Jessica Simpson and Kim Kardashian bronzed. Because your face naturally gets more sun, next dust powder bronzer on your nose, chin and forehead—where the sun hits naturally—for a believable, beachy finish.

**To go full-on bronze** When nothing will do but a just-back-from-Cabo tan, go with unadulterated self-tanner, which contains a full dose of color-enhancing DHA. For the best results, you know the drill: First, shave your legs and exfoliate skin with a non-oil-based scrub; then rub tanner on using circular motions and wash palms immediately. If the idea of orangey streaks gives you stress dreams (we don't blame you!), have a pro customize the right shade of bronze for you. SELF likes Evolv Sidekick, about \$40, custom color that comes in scents like coconut, lime and tea tree oil. And you'll be happy to hear that your tan-in-a-bottle could actually help protect your skin. *Archives of Dermatology* reports that self-proclaimed sun worshippers who were asked to apply self-tanner regularly showed a 33 percent decrease in purposeful outdoor tanning after only two months.



Kate Somerville Somerville 360 Tanning Towelette, \$48 for eight