

How Much Sunscreen Do You Really Need?



So you think you're covered. The truth is, unless you're slathering your sunscreen all over your body, including face, arms and neck you just may be leaving yourself wide open for trouble. And according to the Centers for Disease Control, you need to be using a sunscreen with an SPF of 15 or more.

Now, here's the thing-if you aren't spreading at least a couple of ounces (that's a shot glass) to cover every inch of exposed skin, you aren't going to do the job needed to protect yourself. In reality, most people only apply anywhere from 25 to 75 percent of the amount they should really be using, according to the American Academy of Dermatology.

So, what to do? Here's a guide that you can use to insure that you're covered. And don't stop here. Be sure to get an annual screening. You know, where the Dermatologist looks over your entire body for cancerous areas.

Have A Shot

OK, so here's the rule. If you're going to cover your entire body, use the equivalent of a full shot glass. Don't have a shot glass? How about the size of a golf ball or ping pong ball? That should be ample for your legs, chest, back and arms.

Apply, Rub, Reapply

That shot glass of lotion with an SPF of 15 should be adequate, if you apply it correctly, for a two-hour period. But if you're swimming, sweating and having a lot of fun you'll need to reapply often. Actually the experts recommend an SPF of 30 just to be sure you stay safe, in case you forget to reapply, and especially if you're involved in outdoor athletics.

Not Just The UVB

SPF is our guide for the protection against UVB rays. But that's not enough. Those UVA rays will also lead to premature aging and that deadly killer, cancer. So be sure you choose a lotion that will protect you against both. And while you're at it, look for lotions that also include antioxidants, because that adds another layer of protection. These little rascals go after those "free radicals" that are the biggest culprits for inducing cancer.

Apply Twice

Want to be perfectly safe? Apply two coats of sunscreen. It may sound like overkill, but one coat will most likely leave thin spots or areas you have completely missed.

Watch Out For Those Lips

Did you know that your lower lip acts just like a solar panel when you're out in the sun? And you don't want skin cancer of the lip because that's very serious. This problem is compounded because most sunscreen won't stick to your lips. As with all parts of your body, go with a minimum of SPF 15 and apply every two hours.

Add Some Layers

Don't leave it all up to the sunscreen. Also wear some protective clothing when you're going to be out in the sun for a while. Try this—hold a t-shirt up to the sun. Can you see the sun? Guess what, it can see you, too. That means you need clothing designed for sun protection, with a tighter weave and a dye that absorbs that ultraviolet light.

Every time you get sunburned you're increasing your chances of contracting skin cancer, and if you keep it up, your DNA is in for some damage, as well. So, don't just use sunscreen during the summer months, use it every day, all year long. Just a word to the wise....