

O Magazine New Sunscreen Rules Questions:

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1. Do you have any recent stats on the amount of Melanomas that are being diagnosed locally each year? If so, what are they?
A: Unfortunately not. We do not have a proper register in South Africa for Melanoma. Therefore it is difficult to judge the prevalence rate. However, the number of Melanoma patients, has definitely increased in Dermatology practices.

2. Is there any particular group of people who are more likely to get Melanoma? Why or why not?
A: Melanoma is more common in whites. However, it can also affect people of darker skin and tends to affect their hands and feet and under the nails.
The risk factors are listed:
 1. Very fair skin (skin type I)
 2. People with a family history of Melanoma
 3. A person who has multiple moles and a type of mole called dysplastic naevus
 4. A person is at a higher of getting a second Melanoma, if the person had one before

3. Could you briefly explain the difference between Ultraviolet A rays and Ultraviolet B rays? Also, which of these causes skin cancer or can they both contribute?
A: Both UVA and UVB are part of the ultraviolet rays that reach the earth from the sun. The wavelength of UVB is 290nm-320nm and that for UVA is 320-400nm. UVB is implicated as a risk factor for Squamous cell carcinoma and Basal cell carcinoma of the skin. As far as Melanoma is concerned, the role played by UV rays is not well understood. Most melanomas in young adults occur in sun protected areas where there is no evidence of sun damage.
UVA penetrates the skin deeper and is more likely to contribute to early skin aging and to aggravate diseases that are intolerant to sunshine (Pigmentation problems etc). It may also contribute to skin cancer and the link is still being debated.

4. What are some of the labels we should look for on sunscreen and what do they mean? (ie: broad spectrum protection? Etc.)
A: One should be very careful of sunscreens and buy only from reputable companies. Things that are important to look for are:

1. SPF . Usually the SPF for UVB is listed, however, one must also check the SPF for UVA, which is listed in small characters. The higher the SPF the better the protection.
 2. There are many different ingredients used in sunscreen these days. However, one that contains Titanium dioxide is more broad spectrum and tends to offer better protection. People do not like the Titanium dioxide as it gives a whitish shiny look. Many other choices are available nowadays that contain tints, to make sunscreen more cosmetically acceptable.
 3. Water resistant. This means that the sunscreen was still efficacious after 40-60minutes in water emersion. Thus one has to reapply hourly, if swimming for longer time periods.
 4. One can also look for the label “ mattifying”, if one needs to use it as a ‘base’ or if the shine is unacceptable.
5. Are there any new regulations locally on how sunscreen needs to be labeled and marketed?
- A:No. Sunscreens are considered cosmetics in South Africa. We have no regulations for cosmetics in this country; there are many European countries that take advantage of it, to dump some junk cosmetic products at exorbitant prices in South Africa. CANSA does endorse some sunscreens, but their dealings can are not always clearly understood.
- Use only products that have good clinical studies behind them and if in doubt ask your Dermatologist. The most expensive products do not mean that they are better.
6. What are the most important things to remember when we buy and apply sunscreen? (ie: how often to re-apply, how to choose the right one, avoid sprays? Etc.)
- A: It has been partly answered in questin5.
- Sunscreen should be applied at least half an hour before anticipated sun exposure. One needs to apply at least 2 mg/cm² body surface to get maximum protection. For e.g a 30g tube of sunscreen will just cover the whole body surface. However, due to cost implications and practicality, one should at least put a thick layer on the face and sun exposed areas. A second layer will help improve the application technique. The SPF listed on the label drops drastically if not applied properly, thus if one applies a SPF 30 very thinly, one may only be getting a protection for a SPF 10.
- Most sunscreens will last for at least 6 hours under normal conditions, however, if one is sweating or under intense sun, a 2-3 hourly application is wise.
- Foams and spray are easy to apply over hairy areas. There is some controversy as to the amount that needs to be applied, however, one should still get some protection with whatever amount of spray used.

7. Are sunscreens with a higher SPF actually misleading / more dangerous because people believe they don't have to reapply as often?
- A: Not really. People thought that they were getting 100% protection with a SPF100 and thus became careless. The higher the SPF, the better the sunscreen. A SPF 15 blocks around 93% of the sunrays, SPF 30 blocks around 97% of the sunrays. However, these tests are performed in laboratory conditions and in true situation, the protection is lower. Also as discussed before, people apply them too thinly, thus lowering the SPF further. Therefore, it is best to buy the strongest SPF.
8. **NB:** What are at least 5 other ways we need to protect ourselves from skin cancer, other than by using sunscreen? What are the new sun protection rules?
1. Protect from a young age.
 2. Stay out of the sun for long period of times, between 10 am -3pm
 3. There are many clothes that offer a SPF and if you have very fair skin, it might be a good idea to get those clothes. The thickness of the clothes does not make any difference, it is the knitting that needs to be checked. An easy way to assess clothe, is to pick them up and stretch them in front of the sun and see how much of the sunrays fillers through.
 4. A hat, which is at least 10 cm wide will help protect the face.
 5. Regular check-ups for people at risk. The risk factors were listed above.

The new sun protection rule states that one should protect oneself from both UVA and UVB, thus make use of broad spectrum sunscreens.

Thank you.