

HYPEBAE

A Skincare Expert Tells Us Everything We Need to Know About Sunscreen

Find out what SPF you should be wearing this spring and summer.

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Like many of us, I spent most of my childhood avoiding sunscreen like the plague. I hated its consistency, the way it smelt and how it made my skin feel when applied. It wasn't until I read an interview with Frank Ocean's mother that I learned about the effects of the sun's ray. As a black woman, I thought I was immune to things like sun burn and skin cancer but that couldn't be any further from the truth. Everyone's skin needs *daily* protection from the sun no matter the time of year or climate they live in.

As I began my research I came to find that there's quite a bit of conflicting information on the best way to protect both the face and body from UVA and UVB rays. In an effort to gain some clarity on this ultra-important skincare step, I asked dermatologist and ethnic skincare expert Dr. **William Kwan** some questions to help demystify SPF strength and to learn about the best ways to maintain healthy skin year-round. He recommended a few of his favorite products and we rounded up some of our own for ladies to try this season.



Why do men and women need to wear sunscreen every day?

Sunscreen should be used daily on skin that is exposed to the sun. It helps reduce the effects of UV exposure like skin cancer and premature aging. Just think: if you get 30 minutes of sun on your skin daily, over the course of a year, that totals to almost 180 hours of cumulative sun exposure!

What is the difference between physical and chemical sunscreen? Is there one that is better than the other?

Physical sunscreens include ingredients like zinc oxide and titanium dioxide. They reflect the UV rays off the skin. Typically, they are heavier and can look white on darker skin tones. Chemical sunscreens are agents that absorb the UV radiation and neutralize the rays when they penetrate into the skin. These are typically lighter. They both work, it just comes down to personal preference.

Is sun damage reversible?

This is a complicated question to answer, because some sun damage is permanent. However, we can often help the skin recover a bit by using topical products like Retin-A, laser resurfacing and even some prescription topicals, which can treat precancerous and cancerous changes.



Can you tell us more about sun protection factor (SPF)? Why is there a range from 15 all the way up to 100?

SPF is a measurement determined by how long it takes to burn when sunscreen is applied correctly. I believe most dermatologists feel that an SPF 30 is usually fine for the average person, assuming they apply it on liberally and thickly. An SPF 100 does provide more protection but it doesn't necessarily mean that it's triple the difference. As you go higher up on the SPF, it gives less and less of an advantage over a lower SPF like a 30.

Should people with richer skin tones be wearing a specific type of sunscreen?

Darker skin tones usually do better with a chemical sunscreen. They are light and won't make them appear ashy like a physical sunscreen can.

Are there any ingredients, particularly in makeup, that can counteract the benefits of sunscreen?

There are not really any ingredients that counteract the benefits of sunscreen. On the contrary, I recommend that women use mineral powders to touch up their SPF throughout the day. Most mineral powders are at least an SPF 15.

Lastly, can you suggest two sunscreens that can be used year-round?

I like the Neutrogena Ultra Sheer Dry Touch Sunscreens, this is my favorite drugstore brand. I recommend only spending more money on sunscreen if it's for the face. For the face, I like SkinCeutical's Sheer Physical Defense. I have a darker skin color and it doesn't make me look white when it's applied.



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