

## BE SUNSMART

Whether it's a "Staycation", Magaluf, Marbella or Miami this summer make sure you know how sunscreens work as protecting your skin from the sun is simple and doesn't need to be expensive.

Sunscreen offers some protection as it can effectively block the majority of UV radiation from reaching your skin but should only be used in combination with other methods. It is important to remember that sunscreen shouldn't be used in order to stay out in the sun longer, but as a way to reduce the risk of skin damage when exposure to the sun is unavoidable

### ***So how do sunscreens work?***

Sunscreens are designed to filter out, in varying degrees, the sun's ultraviolet (UV) radiation from reaching your skin. Sunscreens are traditionally divided into physical blocking or (reflecting) agents and UVR chemical absorbers:

Physical barriers (such as zinc oxide or titanium dioxide) reflect or scatter part or all of the UV radiation away from your skin. They tend to be made of opaque products and thus can be seen when applied.

Chemical absorbers absorb part or all of the UV radiation and so prevent your skin from absorbing it. They comprise of different chemical compounds. This is the most common type of sunscreen. They are not visible when applied to the skin. Physical barriers and chemical absorbers are often used in combination in individual products. This often allows the product to absorb or reflect not only UVB, but also UVA radiation as well.

### ***So how do you know if you are getting protection from the UVB rays? And just what does SPF mean?***

All sunscreens sold in this country carry an SPF rating on the bottle. This rating may range from 2 to 60. SPF stands for "Sun Protection Factor". This is a laboratory test, which measures how much longer it takes to burn skin that has sunscreen factor applied, than it takes to burn that skin without sunscreen.

The SPF number is only a guide to its relative strength. For example many people believe that Factor 60 is twice as protective as Factor 30. This is not the case. There is only a very small amount of difference between Factors 30 and 60 in terms of the protection they provide. SPF does not indicate protection provided against UVA radiation.

For adequate protection from the sun the **Irish Cancer Society** would advise all people to use at least SPF 15 or more. Sunscreen should be reapplied every two hours, regardless of the strength of the factor. This is because how long a person will take to burn depends on the:

- Time of day
- Time of year
- The amount of reflection
- How cloudy the day is
- Their skin type

***Here is how you should apply sunscreen***

Apply liberally on all exposed areas of skin before you apply moisturiser or make up and at least 20 minutes before going out in the sun. This allows the sunscreen to bind to the skin for maximum effectiveness. The recommended amount is about a teaspoon for every arm and leg, more for the body or more frequently if it is likely to have been washed or wiped off or if you have been perspiring. Reapply every two hours, or more if you have been swimming or perspiring.

Most sunscreen's use a moisturiser such as sorbolene as the base for the cream and are easily absorbed. Moisturisers containing sunscreen are also effectively absorbed but look for those with protection of at least 15+ and ideally broad spectrum ones (which protect against both UVA & UVB).

Re-applying sunscreen over make-up is a little tricky. One way around this is to select a make-up base or powder with a SPF for the times you plan to be outside for long periods. This way when you reapply your make up you will also be reapplying your sunscreen.

Don't forget your lips!

Your lips do not contain melanin. Therefore, you need to give them extra protection. There are plenty of good lipsticks or lip balms with SPF 15+ ratings. Many cosmetics companies produce a range of products containing sunscreen.

*The Irish Cancer Society has produced this fantastic and easily applied **SunSmart code:***

For the best way to protect your skin simply follow the SunSmart Code:

### 1. Cover Up

- Wear a shirt with a collar.
- Choose clothes with a close weave material that don't allow sun light through.
- Put on a hat that gives shade to your face, neck and ears.



### 2. Use Sunscreen

- Use a sunscreen with an SPF of 15 or higher and UVA protection.
- Put sunscreen on 30 minutes before going out.
- Re-apply every 2 hours.
- Re-apply more often if you have been swimming or sweating.



### 3. Seek Shade

- Especially between 11am and 3pm - when UV rays are at their strongest.
- Use a tree, a sun umbrella or other types of shade to protect yourself.



### 4. Protect Your Eyes

- Wear wrap-around glasses.
- Make sure they give UV protection - check the label.



### 5. Avoid sunbeds and sunlamps

Sunbeds and sunlamps increase your risk of skin cancer. If you want to protect your skin, don't use them



*This article was prepared using information from the Irish Cancer Society and more information is available on the Irish Cancer Society Website*