

# Strategies to avoid sunburn

15 June 2018, by Len Canter, Healthday Reporter



(HealthDay)—If you could protect yourself from cancer, you'd do it, right? Yet most Americans still aren't taking the easiest step to prevent the most commonly diagnosed type—skin cancer, which will affect one in five people at some point in their lives.

Only 14 percent of American men and 30 percent of women regularly use [sunscreen](#) when outside for more than an hour, according to a report from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Among women, avoiding signs of aging was a strong motivator. But avoiding sunburn may be the more important reason for everyone.

The risk of melanoma, the most serious—and potentially deadly—form of skin cancer doubles if you get five or more sunburns in your life, or if as a youngster you had just one blistering sunburn.

And even without [sunburn](#), prolonged tanning exposes you to the two most common skin cancers, basal cell and [squamous cell carcinomas](#),

which can occur anywhere on your body.

While some guidelines suggest SPF 15 sunscreens, the American Academy of Dermatology recommends SPF 30. Also look for water resistant and "broad-spectrum" products to protect against UVA and UVB rays. Always re-apply every 2 hours and after sweating, swimming and toweling off.

Other smart sunscreen tips:

- Apply sunscreen 20 minutes before sun exposure. Don't wait until you're at the beach to put it on.
- Use one full ounce of product for each application.
- Cover exposed [skin](#) from head to toe. That includes ears, the back of your neck and exposed areas of your scalp, especially bald spots.
- Make sun protection a family affair: Help each other cover all those hard-to-reach areas.

**More information:** The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has a detailed infographic on [sun protection for your skin](#) that you can print and hang up as a daily reminder.

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