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Tips for sunscreen use

Sunscreens are an important part of routine skincare and is widely used both for avoidance of sunburns as well as protective effects against harmful ultraviolet (UV) rays on the skin. Below are some tips for using the sunscreen correctly for maximum benefit and protection:

- Sunscreens should be applied 30 minutes before going out in the sun and re-applied every 4 hours.
- Apply the sunscreen evenly on the skin and cover all sun-exposed areas. In most cases individuals apply less amount than what is required so make a conscious effort to apply a liberal amount particularly in very sunny days.
- Use a sunscreen that blocks both UVB and UVA with a high SPF and high star rating.
- SPF is a measurement factor that protects against UVB rays and use a minimum of 30 on normal days or in the winter and ideally use SPF 50 in the summer or very sunny days. Star rating relates to protection against UVA and use a sunscreen with 3 stars or higher for maximum protection. Remember that the UVA rays can penetrate through clouds and windows.
- Sunscreens are either “chemical” or “physical”. It is preferable to use physical sunscreens that contain zinc oxide and titanium dioxide as they are reflective sunscreens and cause less sensitivity and irritation. Chemical sunscreens contain certain chemicals which can cause irritation or even contact allergy in some users.
- Use a water-resistant sunscreen particularly if doing water activities.
- Apply a protective layer of sunscreen on the lips and in particular the lower lip in very sunny days. There are lip balms which contain SPF.
- The degree of sun protection is greatly enhanced when sunscreens are used together with anti-oxidants such as vitamin C serum. It is recommended that the anti-oxidant serum is used first and the sunscreen at the end.
- Snow can reflect the sunlight rays and therefore sunscreens should also be worn when skiing.
- Check the expiry date of your sunscreen and some sunscreens require to be shaken before use. Please read the instructions label carefully.
- Some skin conditions may have extreme sensitivity to the sunlight and these patients may benefit from a sunscreen with a very high factor and extending to include the visible light rays. If you suffer from marked sensitivity to the sun please seek advice from a dermatologist.

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