



Using Sunscreen Safely

- No sunscreen will completely shield you from the effects of ultraviolet radiation (UVR). You can still burn, especially if you have sensitive skin.
- Don't rely on sunscreen as your primary or only form of sun protection: minimise time spent in the sun from 11am to 4pm during the daylight saving months; wear a hat and protective clothing; wear sunscreen on uncovered skin; wear sunglasses and stay in the shade if you can.
- Sunscreen should not be used to increase the amount of time you spend in the sun.
- The Cancer Society recommends the use of broad spectrum, SPF30+ sunscreen.
- Apply adequate amounts of sunscreen 15 minutes before going outside, and re-apply every two hours, especially if swimming or perspiring.

How much protection

The protection a sunscreen offers is affected by its sun protection factor (SPF) rating, whether it is broad spectrum, how evenly and thickly you apply it and how long you spend in the sun. It is also affected by skin type, the time of day, time of year and weather. The longer the time spent in the sun, the more UVR accumulates and the greater the potential for burning.

Sunscreen's protectiveness is not affected by the length of time it has been on the skin, but by

'wear and tear' over time. Even if you're not very active, sunscreen tends to rub off gradually and, therefore, needs to be re-applied regularly. This applies particularly to children because of their active lifestyle.

What is SPF?

The SPF number is a ranking system that shows how much protection is being offered against UVB and some UVA. The higher the number, the more UVR is filtered and the greater the protection. Because of the number of factors involved, (e.g. time of the year, time of day and skin type) the SPF is not precise, but gives a general guide to sun protection.

No matter how high the SPF rating, no sunscreen can screen all UVR. All sunscreens are filters allowing some UVR to pass through to the skin. The higher the SPF, the smaller the amount of UVR that gets through.

Broad spectrum

A broad spectrum sunscreen gives extra protection because it screens out much of both UVA (shorter wave length) radiation and UVB. It is now known that both UVA and UVB contribute to the development of skin cancer.

Water resistance

A water resistance claim of two hours means the sunscreen should retain its full SPF protection even after two hours in the water. However, it is

wise to re-apply sunscreen after any water sports.

Applying sunscreen

Apply sunscreen 15 minutes before sun exposure to allow it time to dry and be absorbed into the skin.

- Use a generous amount of sunscreen. The average sized adult should apply at least a teaspoon of sunscreen to each arm, leg, front of body and back of body and at least ½ a teaspoon to the face (including the ears and neck). That is, 35 ml of sunscreen for one full body application.
- No matter what the sunscreen directions say, always reapply sunscreen every two hours when you are outdoors. Sunscreen can be easily wiped or perspired off and you need to keep putting sunscreen on to get the best protection.

Choosing a sunscreen

- Choose a broad spectrum SPF 30 + water-resistant sunscreen.
- Try a toddler sunscreen or a sunscreen without fragrance if you have sensitive skin.
- Test the sunscreen on a small area of a baby or toddler's skin before using it to make sure there is no reaction. Discontinue use immediately if there is a reaction.

The Ultraviolet Index (UVI)

The Ultraviolet Index (UVI) is an international, scientific measure of the level of ultraviolet radiation (UVR) in the environment. The higher the number the greater the risk of skin damage.

The Cancer Society advises sun protection when the UVI is 3 or higher.

UV Index	Sun Protection
1-2 Green LOW	No protection required.
3-5 Yellow MODERATE	Protection required when spending extended periods in the sun, especially if you have fair skin.
6-7 Amber HIGH	Protection essential between 11am and 4pm. Slip, slop, slap and wrap.
8-10 Red VERY HIGH	Seek shade between 11am and 4pm. Slip, slop, slap and wrap. Cover up. Reapply sunscreen regularly.
11+ Purple EXTREME	Reschedule outdoor activities for early morning and evening. Full protection essential.

UVI levels can be found in daily newspapers and on TV1's weather forecast (during the summer months) and on the SunSmart website www.sunsmart.org.nz.

You are welcome to print and distribute this information sheet!