

# Protecting Your Skin in the Sun

With longer days and southern Arizona temperatures on the rise, the risk of sunburn increases as we spend time outdoors. The University of Arizona Cancer Center reports that Arizona residents have some of the highest rates of skin cancer in the world. More than 1,000 new cases are reported annually.

Although sunscreen is typically applied before a summer day outside or at the pool, sun protection should be practiced 365 days a year, and sunscreen alone is not enough. To maximize your sun protection, consider a few additional measures:

- Seek shade
- Avoid mid-day sun
- Wear sunglasses
- Wear densely woven clothing and broad-brimmed hats
- Apply a broad-spectrum sunscreen with Sun Protection Factor (SPF) 15-30

## Why are broad-spectrum sunscreens recommended?

We need to protect against the sun's entire cancer-causing spectrum. Broad-spectrum determines the combined sunburn-causing Ultraviolet A (UVA) and wrinkle-causing Ultraviolet B (UVB) protection. Look for the following ingredients to provide UVA protection: ecamsule (Mexoryl SX), avobenzone (Parsol 1789), zinc oxide, titanium dioxide.

## What is the Sun Protection Factor (SPF)?

SPF refers to how well the sunscreen protects against UVB only. An SPF 10 or 15 sunscreen applied to a person who normally burns in 10 minutes would protect that person from burning for 100 or 150 minutes, respectively. An SPF 15 sunscreen filters 93% UVB, while SPF 30 filters 97% UVB rays.

## What about water resistant and waterproof sunscreens?

Sunscreens are labeled water resistant when they maintain their SPF after 40 minutes of water immersion, and waterproof when they maintain their SPF after 80 minutes.

## What is the best way to apply sunscreen?

- Apply sunscreens liberally to all sun-exposed skin
- Apply sunscreens at least 20 minutes before and 30

minutes after sun exposure has begun

- Reapply sunscreen every 2 hours and after swimming or vigorous activity or toweling
- Wear lip balm with sunscreen and reapply regularly

## What about sun protection for babies under 6 months of age?

Babies are especially susceptible to the sun damaging effects and should be kept out of the sun. Use mesh window shields in the car and strollers with sun-protective covers. Dress your baby in clothing covering the arms and legs and don't forget the hat. If adequate clothing and shade are not available, apply a sun blocking agent with zinc oxide or titanium dioxide to the small uncovered areas of the body, such as hands and face. These sunscreens may be safer for our babies as they physically block the sun's UVA and UVB rays, rather than being absorbed by the skin.

Learn more about sun protection at [www.healthychildren.org](http://www.healthychildren.org).



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XNU/2026/01