

## ADVANCED SUN SAFETY

Medical research has shown that aging skin is the result of more than just years on the calendar. Exposure to environmental elements like sunlight (Ultraviolet or UV rays), smoke, and air pollution all contribute to skin aging. Not only does this lead to the formation of lines, wrinkles, and pigmentation - it can lead to more serious skin conditions, including skin cancer. While skin cancers are almost always curable when detected and treated early, the surest line of defense is to prevent them in the first place. Here are some sun-safety habits that should be part of everyone's daily healthcare:

1. **Avoid unnecessary sun exposure**, especially during the sun's peak hours (10am to 4pm) and always seek the **shade**.
2. **Cover up** with sun protective clothing, including a broad-brimmed hat, and UV-blocking sunglasses.
3. **Wear a broad-spectrum sunscreen** with a Sun Protection Factor (SPF) of 15+, and use SPF 30-45 on the face and ears.
4. **Avoid tanning salons.**
5. **Examine your skin** from head to toe every month.
6. Have a **professional skin examination** annually.

For those who wish to have that "healthy-looking" glow, there are alternatives. Sunless tanning products allow you to achieve an instant, natural-looking tan and in *no way* contributes to developing skin cancers. But even with your "sunless" tan, remember to wear sunscreen!

An antioxidant program can help prevent photoaging and the onset of more serious skin conditions. Cosmeceutical grade topical antioxidants have now been shown to provide up to eight times the skin's natural protection from UV damage. Broad spectrum (UVA and UVB) sunscreens are a crucial part of the daily prevention process as well. However, antioxidants can protect your skin from the sun in ways that sunscreens can't. When used together, antioxidants and sunscreens provide almost complete photoprotection - preventing photoaging and wrinkle formation, while promoting good skin health. Additionally, I always advise my patients that while department or drug store skin products can be very elegant, the pharmaceutical grade products available in Physician's offices often contain higher percentages of the active, therapeutic ingredients and therefore can be more effective.

One ounce of sunscreen is needed to cover the average exposed areas of an adult. Applying less substantially reduces your protection. There is no such thing as a "waterproof" sunscreen or all-day protection. The FDA only requires testing sunscreen for 80 minutes in still water. Sunscreen needs to be re-applied every two hours to maintain protection. Water resistant sunscreen needs to be applied to dry skin, as sunscreen does not adhere to wet skin.

The most important step in a healthy skin care regimen is that you protect your skin from the damaging UV rays proven to be responsible for premature signs of aging—and the major culprit in causing skin cancers. An SPF level 30 or higher is recommended for the optimal protection of your face. Be aware that SPF only tells you how much UVB protection the product provides. To obtain broad-spectrum (UVA and UVB) protection, look for sunscreen that contains an effective physical sunblock (ex. over 5% zinc or titanium oxide) or a chemical sunscreen absorber that protects in the UVA range. The sun's UVA rays are constant throughout the year, so sunscreen must be worn on cloudy days and in the winter.

Over the course of your life, you should pay close attention to all parts of your skin. Familiarize yourself with it, so you'll notice any changes that might occur, such as any change or development in a mole or skin growth that might indicate skin cancer. Whenever you have a question or concern, make sure you consult your Dr. Bassichis or your physician.