

[Print this Page](#)[Close Window](#)**Sunscreen – the knight in 'shining' armor against skin cancer!**

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The skin, serving to cover and protect the body, needs adequate covering and protection itself – a task much neglected by the vast majority of people. UVA and UVB radiation in the sun's rays reduce the elasticity of the skin causing wrinkles, discoloration and premature aging. Added, the effects of smoking (even passive) and pollution and increase chances of contracting skin irritation, diseases and cancers.

The first step toward healthier skin is determining your skin type. These may be broadly divided into oily, dry, sensitive, resistant, wrinkled and tight. As Dr. Leslie Baumann author of 'The Skin Type Solution' points out, people usually have a combination of these and need to chose their skin care regime in accordance to those particular needs.

Further, increasing evidence leads to conclude that excessive sun exposure increases the risk of melanoma – the worst form of skin cancer. Nearly one-eight of people who contract this cancer die from it. Added, the American Academy of Dermatology estimates that 1/5th Americans will develop some form of skin cancer and that people get 80% of their lifetime sun exposure before they turn 18.

However you are not as helpless as this sounds – sunscreens are highly effective defenses against skin illnesses and cancers. The Sun Protection Factor plays an important role in blocking harmful UVA and B rays from penetrating to the skin. This is a measure of the amount of time the sunscreen would protect the skin when compared to the protection received by naked skin. For instance, if a person could normally manage 10 minutes in the sun without protection and avoid damage, a sunscreen of SPF 15 would multiply this time by 15 – making it 150 minutes. A sunscreen of 15 or higher is usually recommended though consistent use of a lower SPF sunscreen is better than irregular use of a high SPF sunscreen. Also make sure that the sunscreen is water resistant and provides broad spectrum protection. Particular care must be taken to protect children also and the same precautions must be followed for them.

Simple items of clothing too go a long way in protecting against sun burn and cancers. Armed with a broad brimmed hat, a pair of good quality sunglasses and dark, tight knit garments, you can walk through that afternoon sun without too many worries.

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