



Sun protection 101

As we spend more time outside, it's important to protect our skin and eyes from exposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation, the leading cause of skin cancer. There are two types of UV radiation:

- **Ultraviolet A (UVA):** UVA may cause premature aging of skin and play a role in causing basal cell carcinoma, squamous cell carcinoma, and melanoma.
- **Ultraviolet B (UVB):** UVB radiation causes sunburn and is closely linked with the development of skin cancer and melanoma

The first lines of defense is wearing sunscreen daily. When looking for sunscreen, the American Academy of Dermatology (AAD) recommends looking for one that is:

- A broad spectrum: protects against UVA and UVB rays
- SPF 30 or higher
- Water resistant: sunscreen is not waterproof and must be reapplied every two hours or after swimming or sweating



There are two types of sunscreen:

Physical Sunscreen

- Works like a **shield** by sitting on the surface of your skin, deflecting the rays of the sun.
- Look for the active ingredient **zinc dioxide**. Look for 20 to 25% for the best protection.
- This sunscreen is best for sensitive skin.

Chemical Sunscreen

- Works like a **sponge** by absorbing the sun's rays.
- Look for one or more of these active ingredients: **oxybenzone, avobenzone, octocrylene, homosalate and octinoxate**.
- This sunscreen is easier to rub into the skin and doesn't leave a white residue.

Sunscreen should be applied 15 to 30 minutes before sun exposure. **One ounce of sunscreen is the average amount needed to cover exposed skin.**

Other ideas to protect your skin include:

- Stay in the shade during the peak sun hours between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.
- Wear sunglasses with UV protection.
- Wear a hat that covers your scalp, ears and neck.
- Wear sun clothing and shoes.
- Use SPF lip balm.
- Use caution near water, sand and snow. The reflection from these increases the likelihood of sunburn.

www.aad.org*, www.cdc.gov*, www.mayoclinic.org*

*Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan does not own these sites.