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The 5 Biggest Winter Sun Myths

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It may be freezing outside, but that's no reason to stash away your sunblock with your beach towels. We chatted with **Ariel Ostad**, a New York City dermatologist, to find out the most common misconceptions about wearing sunscreen in the colder months.

THE MYTH: My makeup contains SPF 15, so I'm protected from the sun.

THE TRUTH: "Makeup with SPF won't fully protect your skin unless you really cake it on, so you're getting a false sense of security," says Ostad. "Science has shown that for you to get an adequate amount of protection you need a teaspoon or two of sunscreen just for your face. Then, a shot glass full for your arms, another for your chest and abdomen, and so on," he says.

THE MYTH: The sun is the only way to get enough Vitamin D.

THE TRUTH: "This is one of the biggest controversies," says Ostad. "As a dermatologist, 99% of the skin cancer that I see is due to sun exposure. People do need vitamin D for bone loss, but you can get enough of it from supplements or by eating fish and green leafy vegetables, or by drinking fortified milk. If you are in the sun for 15 minutes per day you will have received all the vitamin D you need—just make sure to put on sunscreen first."

THE MYTH: SPF 80 is better than SPF 30.

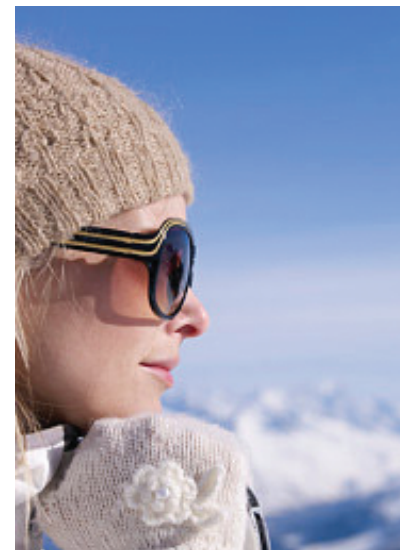
THE TRUTH: SPF 80 is no better than SPF 30 if it doesn't contain ingredients that block both UVA and UVB rays. "There are three ingredients to look for: zinc oxide, titanium dioxide, and mexoryl," he says. "As for the SPF number, you shouldn't be wearing anything less than SPF 30 with UVA/UVB protection." His favorite sunscreen brands? Nia 24 and La Roche Posay.

THE MYTH: Getting a base tan at the tanning salon will prevent me from burning on vacation.

THE TRUTH: "Tanning beds have now been labeled as a carcinogen by the government. We've known this all along, but now it's official," Ostad says. "Any tan, including a base tan, is a sign of damage to your skin—because the actual tan is the result of your body increasing pigmentation in an attempt to protect itself."

THE MYTH: I don't sit outside in the winter, so I don't need to wear SPF.

THE TRUTH: "The winter may not be warm, but the sun's rays still exist. On a clear day your skin will still absorb them and be slowly damaged over time," says Ostad. "Even if you're only outside for a total of 30 minutes, five times per week (walking to work or taking a lunch break)—over a year that adds up to 7,800 minutes in the sun."



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