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## Sun-Damaged, No More: The Ultimate Sun Protection Know-it-All Guide

posted May 10th 2010 2:00PM by Gina Nguyen

in Skincare

KNOW YOUR SKIN

## UV Exposure and "U"

Let's cover the basics, first. Look it up anywhere, and you'll find that sun damage occurs from over-exposure to ultraviolet radiation. Prominent New York City dermatologist Dr. Ariel Ostad confirms, pointing out ultraviolet A (UVA) and ultraviolet B (UVB) as the co-conspirators. "When this ultraviolet energy enters the skin, they damage the skin cells, causing visible and invisible injuries," he explains. "Some of the injury is repaired, but other cell damage accumulates year after year."

## I Saw the Sign

Looking at your skin, can you pinpoint the signs of sun damage and when that damage occurred? Dr. Ostad says, "For most individuals, the majority of skin damage due to the sun occurs before the age of 18. Early in life, sunburns are the only signs of over-exposure." Apparently, only later in life will we finally be able to recognize the detrimental effects to our skin and body. Both dermatologists point out the following to be common signs of sun damage:

-  Pre-mature skin aging
-  Discolorations, such as: unwanted redness, blotchy dark and light pigmentation, and yellowing
-  Leathery skin, wrinkles and diminished elasticity
-  Freckles
-  Age spots and liver spots
-  Immune system suppression
-  Skin cancer: basal cell, squamous cell, or melanoma

LOVE YOUR SKIN

## Get Defensive

The good news is that there are a myriad of ways we can protect our skin. The first strategy suggested by both dermatologists is to avoid direct sun exposure. This is "especially important between the hours of 10:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m.," Dr. Ostad emphasized, as "midday summer sunlight has the greatest concentration and intensity of UVA and UVB rays."

## NIA 24 Sun Damage Prevention 100% Mineral Sunscreen SPF 30

This is the top one recommended by both Dr. Salmon and Dr. Ostad. Dr. Ostad explains that "NIA 24 is the only sunscreen on the market today which includes all of the essential ingredients needed to give you a broad spectrum of coverage." NIA 24 includes the big-hitters zinc oxide and a special, niacin, as well as titanium oxide. NIA 24 separates itself from the pack with its special, breakthrough form of niacin called Pro-Niacin®. It is the first and only patented niacin molecule that converts to its active form to regenerate skin cell layers. The Skin Cancer Foundation even recommends it as an effective UV sunscreen. Learn about [more NIA 24 skin care products](#) with Pro-Niacin®.



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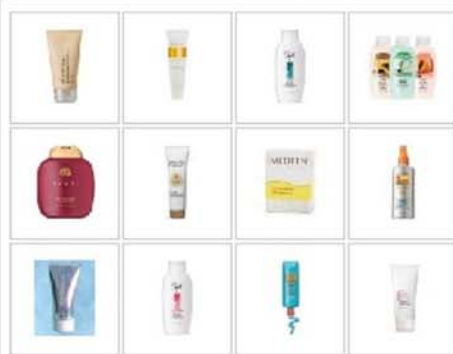
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## Solving the SPF Conundrum

We now know that active ingredients are important to consider when choosing a sunscreen, but you might still have the nagging question of which SPF is right for you. Again, the suggested SPF to apply when going outdoors is 30, but if you want a more customized answer, Dr. Ostad recommends taking a look at the chart below.

Skin Complexion	Sun's Impact on the Skin	Suggested SPF to Help Avoid Sunburn
Very Fair	Always burns easily Never tans	SPF 30 → SPF 50
Fair	Always burns easily Tans minimally	SPF 30 → SPF 50
Light	Burns moderately Tans eventually	SPF 15 → SPF 30
Medium	Burns minimally Always tans well	SPF 15 → SPF 30
Dark	Rarely burns Tans readily	SPF 15 → SPF 30
Very Dark	Never burns Becomes deeply pigmented	SPF 15 → SPF 30

### The Rules of Application

Many people are confused about when and how often to re-apply sunscreen. I am among the many. However, Dr. Ostad and Dr. Salmon easily cleared this up.



"Sunscreens should be applied 15 to 30 minutes before going outdoors," says Dr. Ostad. He urges that we pay particular attention to the face, ears, hands and arms, and make sure to apply one ounce—a shot glass full—of sunscreen, which is considered the amount needed to cover exposed areas.

Dr. Salmon adds that we must also remember to protect our lips as these are "also at risk of skin cancer and premature aging."

Both dermatologists recommend that reapplication occur every two hours or after swimming, exercising or sweating.

A warning from Dr. Ostad for all you fans of water-resistant products, however: "Even so-called 'water-resistant' sunscreens may lose their effectiveness after 40 minutes in the water. Sunscreens rub off as well as wash off, so if you've towel-dried, reapply sunscreen for continued protection."

### SPF in Makeup: Is it Enough?



Browse a [drugstore](#) or [beauty retailer](#), and you'll see SPF popping up in all sorts of makeup products. But, can we trust these to do the job of sunscreen? Dr. Ostad says, "SPF found in makeup such as [bareMinerals](#) is a great way to get additional coverage," however, "you should also apply an SPF underneath makeup so it can absorb into your skin." He reasons that SPF mineral powders only sit on the top layer of skin, making them vulnerable to being wiped off. Try bareMinerals [Mineral Veil SPF 25](#) (\$19) or [Matte Foundation with Mini Brush with SPF 15](#) (from \$22) over your moisturizer sunscreen.

### Doctor, Doctor!

How often do you visit your dermatologist? Do you even have one? Dr. Ostad and Dr. Salmon both agree that annual skin checks with a dermatologist are extremely important if you want to optimize your health! Dr. Ostad says it's as important as seeing your family physicians for yearly physicals. In addition, he advises that we perform monthly self-examinations to observe changes in our skin to aid in the early detection of skin cancer. Dr. Ostad suggests we contact our dermatologist immediately "regarding any concerns or changes with moles, freckles or spots," especially if members of our family have been diagnosed with skin cancers.

Diagnoses of skin cancer outnumber the combined

### The Experts:

Dr. Ariel Ostad, a prominent New York City dermatologist (897 Lexington Avenue, NY, NY, 212-517-7900)