

My Favorite Sun Protection Cosmetics Tip

The Skin Cancer Foundation Journal asked four leading dermatologists for their favorite sun protection cosmetic tips.



Deborah Sarnoff, MD

Self-tanners

"It's hard to change women's perceptions about having a 'healthy glow' or 'getting some color' versus looking pale," says Dr. Sarnoff, who is Associate Clinical Professor of Dermatology at New York University and a member of The Skin Cancer Foundation's Dr. Rex and Johnnie Amonette Circle. "With that in mind, I recommend using a self-tanner that contains DHA (the only FDA-approved sunless tanning ingredient) and looking for one with a tint. When lotion is slightly tinted, it's easier to see where you've put it on and you avoid uneven application. I advise exfoliating before using the product, paying attention to hands, knees, ankles, wrists and elbows – places where the self-tanner needs to be applied carefully because it can build up in those areas and look darker. Use a self-tanner that advertises a lighter color, so it's not a drastic change from your natural complexion. Once your self-tan is set, arm yourself with a sunscreen of SPF 30, and you're ready to look great at the beach, and be protected against burning."



Tina Alster, MD

Sunscreen Moisturizers

For women who don't have a lot of time in the morning, Dr. Alster, director of The Washington Institute of Dermatologic Laser Surgery and Clinical Professor of Dermatology at Georgetown University, Washington, DC, recommends a practical approach. "I like products that can do double-duty – they're time savers. I recommend looking for a tinted moisturizer with an SPF of at least 15. Tinted moisturizers are great; they usually come in a few different shades for different skin tones, and they can act as a foundation, a moisturizer and a sunblock all in one."



Ariel Ostad, MD

Men Need Protection, Too

Women aren't the only ones who are concerned about their skin these days. Men need to recognize that sun protection and caring for their skin can take years off their appearance. "Men don't do enough to protect their skin. They don't use sunscreen and they don't use moisturizer," says Dr. Ostad, Clinical Assistant Professor of Dermatology at New York University Medical Center, and a member of the Dr. Rex and Johnnie Amonette Circle. "I get a lot of men coming into my office and presenting with dry skin, flaking, rashes and eczema. As we age, our skin loses its ability to retain moisture. After shaving, men should apply a sunscreen first, and then a moisturizer." Dr. Ostad recommends an oil-free moisturizer for oily skin, and a cream moisturizer for dry skin.



Jeffrey Dover, MD

Moisturizer vs. Sunscreen

But what a product can do and can't do may be a source of confusion to many shoppers, notes Dr. Dover, Associate Clinical Professor of Dermatology at Yale School of Medicine. "A lot of women are under the misconception that a sunscreen with an SPF of 30 is more effective than a moisturizer with SPF 30, and that is simply not true. SPF is measured by the FDA; it's a standard. SPF 30 is SPF 30, no matter what the medium is. So an anti-aging or anti-oxidant product that has an SPF of 15 is just as good as a sunscreen with an SPF of 15. A number of wonderful, cosmetically elegant products are available on the market today. The trick is to find one you like. The keys are scent and texture. If you don't like the way it smells, and you don't like the way it feels, you're not going to wear it."