

Sunscreen is a lotion, spray, or gel that absorbs or reflects some of the sun's ultraviolet (UV) radiation, and helps protect against sunburn. Some cosmetic products also contain ingredients that may help to protect your skin.

## How to Select a Sunscreen:

- All sunscreens are rated with a SPF (Sun Protection Factor) number. SPF tells you how long you may be exposed to UVB light (**NOT** UVA light) before you burn. An SPF of 15 means that you can be exposed to sunlight 15 times longer than unprotected skin before burning. **Select a sunscreen with an SPF of at least 15.**
- Some medications can make your skin more sensitive to sunburn. If you are taking any of these medications, **select a sunscreen with an SPF of at least 30.** (These medications are called 'photosensitizing' drugs.)
- Areas of the skin previously treated with radiation therapy are more sensitive to a sunburn or skin discoloration when exposed to the sun. If you have recently received radiation treatment to the head, neck or other areas of skin not normally covered with clothing, **select a sunscreen with an SPF of at least 30.**

## Some Photosensitizing Drugs Used by Cancer Patients

<b>Chemotherapy Drugs</b>	5-Fluorouracil (5FU) Dacarbazine (DTIC) Flutamide	Interferon Methotrexate Tretinoin	Vinblastine
<b>Other Drugs used to prevent cancer symptoms</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (e.g. Naproxen, Ibuprofen)</li> <li>- Some anti-nausea drugs (e.g. Prochlorperazine)</li> <li>- Sulfa antibiotics (e.g. Cotrimoxazole)</li> <li>- Other antibiotics (e.g. Ciprofloxacin)</li> </ul>		

- Select a sunscreen that protects you against **UVA and UVB radiation.** Different sunscreen products contain one or more chemicals to protect against UVA and/or UVB radiation. Ask your pharmacist for help to choose a suitable product for you.
- When using a new sunscreen, it is a good idea to test it on a small area of skin first. Check for redness and irritation at the site where the cream was applied. Wait at least 24 hours before using it on a large area of your body. Discontinue use of any sunscreen product if a skin rash or irritation occurs.
- Avoid contact with the eyes.

For more information on sunscreens, please call your doctor or nurse, or the London Regional Cancer Program pharmacist.

### How to Use a Sunscreen Product:

- Sunscreens work best if they are applied about 30 minutes to one hour before going out in the sun. Cover all skin that will be exposed to the sun. If you are sweating or swimming, apply the sunscreen every 2 hours.
- A water-resistant or waterproof sunscreen may be a good choice if you will be swimming or perspiring heavily.
- Sun protection for your lips is very important. A lip balm, with an SPF of 15 or greater should be applied to the lips 30 minutes to 1 hour before going out in the sun. Reapply at least once every hour while in the sun and after eating or drinking.
- Lotion or cream sunscreens are recommended. If you have dry or sensitive skin, avoid alcohol-based sunscreens. If your skin is oily, an alcohol or gel-based product may be a good choice.

### Precautions:

- Some people are sensitive to certain ingredients in sunscreen products, and may develop skin rashes from the sunscreen. Ask your pharmacist for help.
  - Select a sunscreen that is PABA-free. PABA is an ingredient in some sunscreens, which can cause allergic reactions. If you are sensitive or allergic to artificial sweeteners, local anesthetics, sulfa antibiotics, oral hypoglycaemic agents (for diabetes control), or other PABA-based sunscreens, you should avoid **PABA-type** sunscreen products.
  - If you are sensitive to cinnamon compounds (used in perfumes or as flavouring agents in toothpastes and foods), you should avoid the **cinnamate-type** sunscreen products.

### How to Protect Yourself from the Sun:

- Try not to go out in the sun **between the hours of 10:00 am. and 3:00 p.m.** This is the time when the sun's rays are strongest and you have the highest chance of getting a sunburn. Remember if it is a hazy day and the sun is covered by clouds, you still need to protect yourself from the sun. The sun's rays can reflect off sand, water and pavement. Even if you are in the shade, it is possible for as much as 80% of the sunlight to reach you.
- **Wear protective clothing.** Long-sleeved shirts and pants provide better sun protection than shorts and sleeveless tops. Be sure your shoulders and back are covered. A sun hat should always be worn and it should be wide-brimmed to protect your ears and neck. Wear sunglasses to protect your eyes. Select a pair which are treated to absorb ultraviolet (UV) radiation. Ask your pharmacist or eye doctor to recommend a pair suitable for you.
- **Apply a sunscreen to your skin before going out in the sun.**
- **Avoid tanning salons and sunlamps** since the rays emitted from these sources can also cause sunburn and premature aging of the skin.