

# SHEDDING LIGHT ON SUNSCREEN CLAIMS



## **Confused by sunscreen labeling and not sure exactly what protection each product offers?**

Be unsure no more: The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has a new standard test for over-the-counter sunscreen that determines which products are permitted to use “broad spectrum” on their labels.

Under the new labeling requirements, sunscreens using that claim have passed a test that shows they provide protection against ultraviolet B (UVB) and ultraviolet A (UVA) rays, and all types of skin damage caused by the sun. While UVB is the primary culprit in sunburn, both types of rays can cause sunburn, skin cancer and skin aging. These products will also carry a label showing a sun protection factor (SPF) of 15 or higher. Sunscreen products that aren’t labeled

broad spectrum or that have an SPF of 2 to 14 will include the warning “This product has been shown only to help prevent sunburn, not skin cancer or early skin aging.”

As for water resistance, labels must now show how long a user can expect protection while swimming or sweating: either 40 minutes or 80 minutes. The words “waterproof,” “sweatproof,” “sunblock” and “instant protection” will not be permitted on labeling, nor will claims of protection lasting more than two hours without reapplication, unless the manufacturer has testing data — as well as FDA approval — to back those claims up.



- Seek out shade. Protecting yourself from the sun doesn't mean you can never go outside. Use a sun shade or umbrella at the beach or pool, and stick to shady porches if you're enjoying an afternoon outside at home or having an al fresco lunch.
- Stay indoors at the hottest hours. The sun is most intense during the middle of the day. Keep your outdoor activities to the early morning or evening, when the weather is cooler.
- Make sunscreen a part of your daily routine. Even a short walk to and from the car, or passing by sunny windows while indoors can expose your skin to dangerous UV rays.
- Wear protective clothing. Loose, lightweight long pants and long sleeved shirts are ideal sun protection for older adults because they don't have to be reapplied like sunscreen, and can offer better protection. Make sure they have a tight weave so sun can't sneak through. Top them off with a wide-brimmed hat. If you plan to spend time outdoors, look for clothing specially designed to offer UV protection. Also look for UV-blocking sunglasses, window shades and car window tints.
- Use moisturizer. As skin ages, it becomes more prone to dryness, which can be made worse by sun damage. Keep skin moist with a lotion or cream to help protect it.



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