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SCREEN STARS
FROM LEFT: CLARINS
SUNSCREEN SPRAY
GENTLE MILK-
LOTION SPF 20;
LA ROCHE-POSAY
ANTHELIOS SX
SPF 15; MD SKINCARE
POWERFUL SUN
PROTECTION
SPF 30; SHISEIDO
SUN PROTECTION
EYE CREAM
SPF 32; SISLEY
SPF 30 BROAD
SPECTRUM
SUNSCREEN;
PROPOLINE EYE
AND LIP CREAM
SPF 25; KIEHL'S
SPF 30 ALL-SPORT
YEAR-ROUND FACE
& BODY LOTION.

SUNSCREEN master class

Are you wearing
SPF but still
getting burned?
Catherine Piercy
on the ins and
outs of protecting
your skin.



There's an inconvenient truth: Most people purport to wear sunscreen—every day under makeup, certainly on ski slopes and at the beach—yet skin cancer rates are rising instead of falling, as is the number of women

turning up at the dermatologist's office for sun-damage-reversing Fraxel and GentleWaves sessions. Of the 1 million new cases of skin cancer the Skin Cancer Foundation anticipates this year, more than 59,000 will be diagnosed as melanoma—the third most common form of cancer in women between the ages of 20 and 39. These findings are especially ironic since there are now more sunscreen choices than ever, with something for virtually every skin type and personality: There are weightless cooling formulas from Neutrogena, fuss-free

sprays from Coppertone, speed-drying gels from PreSun, pocket-size wipes from Estée Lauder, and elegant, non-stinging eye creams from Shiseido and Clarins. So what are we doing wrong? And how can we guarantee future sunscreen success?

LEARNING THE LINGO

All sun care is not created equal. The most important piece of information on a sunscreen label is the indication of "broad spectrum" coverage—protection against both UVB rays (which burn) and UVA rays (which penetrate deeper into the skin to cause DNA damage and photo-aging). SPF ratings can be deceptive, as they indicate only the level of UVB coverage. (Dermatologists are currently petitioning the FDA to list a sunscreen's PPD/PFA—the numbers used to measure UVA protection.)

A working knowledge of active ingredients is also key: Physical *beauty* >192



BEACH-BOUND
KAROLINA KURKOVA,
PHOTOGRAPHED BY
MARIO TESTINO; VOGUE,
DECEMBER 2003.

summer skin special

BEAUTY HEALTH & FITNESS sunscreen 101

blockers like titanium dioxide and zinc oxide work by reflecting UVA and UVB rays before they reach the skin. Chemical filters, on the other hand, absorb UVA radiation, converting it safely to heat, and are regularly blended with effective UVB filters like homosalate. The most powerful UVA absorbers are Mexoryl (which caused a frenzy when the FDA approved it last year, generating the kind of waiting lists more common to the latest hot-off-the-runway handbag), now available in La Roche-Posay's Anthelios SX and Lancôme's UV Expert, and its formidable competitor Helioplex, the avobenzone-powered blend in Neutrogena's revamped sun-care collection. (Aveeno's sun products contain a similar formulation.)



THE COVER-UP
 APPLY SPF BEFORE SLIPPING INTO YOUR SWIMSUIT—NOT AFTER. FROM FAR LEFT: EMILIO PUCCI; OSCAR DE LA RENTA; NEUTROGENA ULTRA SHEER DRY-TOUCH SUNBLOCK SPF 70.

says Gross. "So if you're putting it on for the first time when you get to the beach, you're already too late." Spray formulas like Clinique Body Spray SPF 30 and Coppertone Oil-Free QuickCover SPF 50 (ideal for hitting hard-to-reach places) are best applied indoors for an even more practical reason: If it looks like your sunscreen mist is blowing away in the breeze, "that's probably where it's going," says Tina Alster, M.D., clinical professor of dermatology at Georgetown University Medical Center. SPF lip products like DDF Glossy Lip Therapy SPF 15 may seem frivolous, but, says Gross, "skin cancer of the lower lip moves quickly into the chest and lungs through lymphatic drainage, making it a critical area to cover."



Smoothing on too little sunscreen can render an SPF 50 as ineffective as an SPF 2"

SAFETY IN NUMBERS?

SPF ratings are soaring—Shiseido now offers a 55, Skin Effects by Dr. Jeffrey Dover a 60, Neutrogena a 70—but does a 50 or above provide that much more protection than a fifteen or a 30? "An SPF 30 offers significantly more protection than SPF 15, but the numbers game is misleading," says New York dermatologist Dennis Gross, M.D., who notes that above 30, a sunscreen's additional UV-absorbing abilities are negligible. In fact, higher SPF numbers signify little more than a formula's staying power. "An SPF 70 is generally heavier in texture, which makes it less likely to rub off quickly—but it's not giving you twice as much UV protection as an SPF 35," he says. In the end, sun-blocking success is less about the number on the bottle and more about the method by which you apply it, and how frequently.

The Skin Cancer Foundation suggests using a "quarter-size dollop" of sunscreen for the face (this is why makeup with built-in sunscreen should not be trusted as a sole source of protection—are you really going to use that much foundation?), and another two tablespoons to cover the entire body. "And don't be afraid to mess up your roots," adds Gross. "I'm seeing an epidemic of skin cancer at the hairline."

SUCCESS IN EXCESS

Recent studies show that smoothing on too little sunscreen, too infrequently, "can render an SPF 50 as ineffective as an SPF 2," says Jeffrey Dover, M.D., associate clinical professor of dermatology at the Yale University School of Medicine.

COVER YOUR BASES

Some commonly overlooked sites for skin cancers (even melanoma) include between toes, behind knees, and inside ears. To avoid a spotty application, stand in front of a mirror and spread a generous amount of cream, gel, or spray over the entire body—covering literally every inch of yourself—before slipping into a cherry-red Eres bikini or Pucci's cutout maillot. Swimsuits tend to shift, and this ensures you're well covered. Another reason to apply chez vous: "Sunscreen takes about 20 minutes to absorb into the skin, which is plenty of time to burn,"

TIMING IS EVERYTHING

"Most people think of sunscreen as a coat of armor that they can put on in the morning and forget about for the rest of the day," says Gross. In fact, most formulas will break down in the presence of sunlight within about two hours, and should therefore be reapplied, whether you're at the pool or in the office. Dry mineral-powder formulas—from Innovative Skincare and Peter Thomas Roth—won't disrupt makeup.

IS WATERPROOF FOOLPROOF?

The words *waterproof* and *water-resistant* are long-standing topics of FDA debate. Waterproof formulas are designed to hold up against ocean waves for up to 80 minutes, while water-resistant ones last about half as long. In either case, a fresh dose should be applied "absolutely every time you get out of the water and towel off," says Alster. "Sport" formulas, which give the impression of having more staying power, are made with stickier, tackier ingredients to withstand perspiration. Most also contain what Dover refers to as "no-slip-grip technology," meaning they absorb quickly into the skin so they won't compromise your golf swing or tennis serve. □

health > 194