

## What You Need to Know About Sunscreen (Plus a Giveaway!)

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As someone with fair skin who burns relatively easily, I go through bottles of sunscreen quickly. While I can't deny that I love the way I look with a tan, I'm freaked out about the risk of developing skin cancer, especially since it's the most common form of cancer in the United States. In fact, according to the Skin Cancer Foundation, one in five Americans will develop skin cancer in their lifetime — and women 39 and under have a higher probability for developing melanoma than any other cancer except breast cancer. That's why I stick with using bronzers and self-tanners whenever I'm lusting after a sun-kissed glow.

In an effort to raise awareness about this deadly disease, the Skin Cancer Foundation has hit the road for its fifth annual **Road to Healthy Skin Tour**, presented by **Aveeno** and **Rite Aid**. At each stop, visitors will be able to receive free skin checks. More than 13,000 people have been screened — and more than 200 suspected cases of melanoma have been detected — since the tour's start. Visit the **Skin Cancer Foundation web site** to find a stop near you. Plus, keep reading for your chance to win an Aveeno sunscreen. I recently stopped by the bus when it came to New York, and spoke with **dermatologist Rebecca Baxt, MD, a spokesperson for The Skin Cancer Foundation, and an assistant professor of clinical dermatology at New York University**. We chatted about monthly mole self-checks, how to apply sunscreen correctly, and why tanning is never a good idea. Here are Dr. Baxt's tips for staying protected from the sun:

### **Follow the ABCDE's to melanoma when checking for moles.**

Conduct your monthly mole self-check at the same time as your breast exam so you won't forget. Look in the mirror to check your back, or get a friend or family member to check for you if you can't see, says Dr. Baxt. Look for asymmetry; border irregularity, color, diameter, and evolving shape, size, or color.

### **Look for a sunscreen with titanium dioxide and zinc oxide.**

"My favorite two ingredients are titanium dioxide and zinc oxide, just because I feel that those are inert substances and they're really safe," says Dr. Baxt. "People sometimes don't like them because they can be a little thick and white-ish when you put them on, although plenty of the newer formulations, are thinner and easier to apply." Try **Aveeno Active Naturals Natural Protection Mineral Block with SPF 30**. It has oat to soothe sensitive skin, absorbs very easily, and blocks both UVA and UVB rays.

### **Pay attention to the label.**

Look for a sunscreen that says broad-spectrum, because that will offer UVA (rays that cause aging) and UVB (rays that cause burning) protection. Under the **FDA's new guidelines**, only a sunscreen that protects against both types of rays can be labeled broad-spectrum.

When it comes to SPF, 30 is a good number. "I always recommend at least an SPF 30 in the warmer months. In the dead of winter, SPF 15 is ok with me," says Dr. Baxt, "but as soon as the sun really comes out, I think you really need — if you really want to protect yourself — a 30."

SPF is a measure of how sunscreen works against UVB rays. When you use an SPF 30, that means it's going to take you 30 times longer than it would normally take you to burn in the sun. The difference between SPF levels gets small as the numbers go higher. "The difference between 15 and 30 is bigger than between 30 and 45," explains Dr. Baxt.

### **Apply sunscreen with a heavy hand.**

"You should be a greasy monkey," says Dr. Baxt. "It should be gloppy all over you, which people don't like but that's how it works." Dr. Baxt also explains that sunscreen only lasts two to three hours at best. "You have to put it on very liberally, and you've got to put it on every two hours," she says. "If you're in the water, every one hour, I recommend."

### **Don't neglect the little areas.**

People often forget to protect their ears, backs of neck, tops of feet, scalp, and edges of their bathing suits. If you're not wearing a hat, Dr. Baxt suggests spritzing a spray sunscreen to protect your part. Try **Aveeno HydroSport Sunscreen Spray SPF 50**. And, make sure you put your sunscreen on a little bit in advance before going out.

### **Get your glow on safely.**

"The tanning booth is just pure evil, it just creates so many problems," says Dr. Baxt. "The tanning booth causes pigment and wrinkles, thickens your skin, and I tell people you're going to end up looking like a little leathery old lady." Instead, try a spray tan, which lasts for about a week, or use bronzers and self-tanners for a healthy-looking glow.