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## Sunblock vs. Sunscreen



We love sunny days, but not the damage the sun can do to our skin. If you've ever been confused about the best way to protect your skin and the difference between sunblock and sunscreen, join the club. Here is the skinny on practical [skin protection](#), so you can enjoy the sunny summer days ahead.

### Sunblock vs. Sunscreen

Sunblock simply uses a physical ingredient to partially "block" the sun's rays from striking and damaging your skin. Zinc Oxide, Titanium Dioxide, and heavily pigmented makeup are good examples, says [Dr. Aaron Tabor](#), skincare expert and creator of the inside out program. [Sunscreens](#), on the other hand, contain special chemicals that absorb or reflect the sunshine's ultraviolet rays in order to prevent your skin from being harmed.

### UVA vs. UVB Rays

UVB and UVA act differently upon the skin and do not equally damage it. Both UVA and UVB damage and because radiation doses (whether x-rays or sun rays) are cumulative, they can lead to [skin cancer](#), says Dermatologist and Founder of Wholistic Dermatology, [Dr. Julia T. Hunter M.D.](#)

The UVB rays are primarily responsible for most cases of sunburn, as they are shorter than UVA rays and penetrate less deeply through the surface of the skin- the epidermis layer. The UVB radiation is absorbed by the stratum corneum on the epidermis surface which is the dead, needing exfoliation, outermost visible layer of the skin which also provides some small amount of [sun protection](#). This is why you have to be more careful when you are exfoliated because this layer is removed but the tradeoff is your skin looks better and collagen stimulation is improved, explains Dr. Hunter.

The UVA rays are not absorbed by the atmosphere and reach the Earth, causing the damage to be deeper, into the DNA, as its rays are longer than the UVB and reach the inner strata of the skin and skin cells. They are much more responsible for causing the skin to lose its elasticity and wrinkling, brown spots, leading to premature and accelerated aging of the skin, and can burn the skin at a deeper level.

### SPF: How much and how often?

Dr. Tabor recommends an SPF of at least 30 reapplied at least every 2 hours or sooner if you are sweating or swimming. Make sure to thoroughly cover the tips of your ears and nose (prime areas for skin cancer). "If you are outside from 10 AM to 4 PM, then apply an extra thick layer. Remember the best protection is a hat, shirt, and limited time in the sun. Protect your skin year round, and don't forget to protect your lips with sunscreen balm," says Dr. Tabor.

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## Beauty Moment

### The Best Sunblocks

We asked Dr. Hunter to recommend a great sunblock. She recommends [SKIN THERAPY Maximal Strength SPF 30 Sun Protection and Repair](#) (1 oz., \$55), which is both a sunscreen and a sunblock scientifically. The product contains non-toxic, non-inflammatory, chirally-correct (for maximal absorption) sunscreen ingredients. Dr. Hunter suggests this product because it contains zinc for the sunblock and anti-inflammatory aspect. This product is therapeutic for blemishes, skin irritations and is the only non-toxic sun protection product on the market which does not turn skin of color gray.

### The Best Sunscreens

Choose a sunscreen that states at least SPF 30, "Water-Resistant", and "Broad-Spectrum" to make sure you are doing enough to fight the [signs of aging](#). Dr. Tabor suggests sunscreens that contain "avobenzone" as the active ingredient, in combination with Zinc Oxide or Titanium Dioxide, can provide the best protection with the least amount of toxicity.

Avoid sunscreens that contain the hormone disruptors "oxybenzone" and "4-MBC" because they may cause many hormone related diseases. "PABA" should also be avoided as it may increase DNA damage. "Choose a product that does not contain [Vitamin A](#) (retinol or derivatives), parabens, PEGs, glycols, sulfates, petrochemicals, phthalates, artificial fragrances, synthetic colorants, 1,4 dioxane, and soap-based emulsifiers to minimize chemical toxicity to your body," says Dr. Tabor.

### Protect Skin from the Inside Out

A number of nutrients have been shown to protect your skin from the sun's damaging rays, literally from the inside out. Specifically, certain powerful antioxidant plant compounds found in many fruits and vegetables have the ability to protect the skin from the adverse effects of UV radiation, says Dr. Tabor. Dr. Tabor recommends the following nutrients with known sun-protection benefits:

*Lycopene.* Lycopene is a red plant pigment found in tomatoes and watermelon and it possesses impressive antioxidant properties. When it comes to the sun, lycopene has been shown to reduce the skin's sensitivity to sunlight.

*Lutein.* Lutein, found in spinach, is a natural substance known as a xanthophyll, which works as an antioxidant, absorbing light energy and protecting the skin from sun damage.

*Olive fruit extract.* This extract contains plant-based nutrients that reduce the skin's sensitivity to ultraviolet light and support the skin's protective barrier to help repair skin daily.

*Green tea extract.* [Green tea](#) is a good source of polyphenols known as flavonoids, with the predominate flavonoid being catechins. Catechins are potent antioxidants that have been shown to help protect the skin from the free-radical and oxidative damage associated with sun exposure. Eating a diet high in fruits and vegetables and drinking a cup or two of [green tea](#) daily will help you take in these vital nutrients that naturally protect your skin from the sun.

Also remember that skin of every color needs sun protection and that products marketed to skin of color is historically full of inflammatory ingredients which may exacerbate blemishes, pore enlargement, skin discolorations, disease-internal and external, says Dr. Hunter.

Note: Dr. Hunter filled us in on some new FDA regulations regarding sunblocks and sunscreens: Manufacturers cannot make claims that sunscreens are "[waterproof](#)" or "sweat proof" or identify their products as "sunblocks" (so all sun protection can only be called a sunscreen because nothing completely blocks the sun's rays from hitting the skin which is why you need to layer sun protection). Also, sunscreens cannot claim protection immediately on application (for example, "instant protection") or protection for more than two hours without reapplication, unless they submit unassailable data and get difficult approval from FDA.

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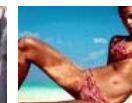
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