

Sunscreen should be reapplied throughout the day

By Mandy Kendall

Are you really protecting yourself against the sun?

We may be most of the way through the summer but it is never too late to make sure we are protecting ourselves correctly in the sun.



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Here are some common mistakes people make when it comes to spending time in the sun:

I don't burn, so I don't need sunscreen – Apparently one of the most common sunscreen misdemeanors is not wearing any. By now we should all know that too much time in the sun can increase the risk of skin cancer (the most common of all cancers) and early skin aging. Tanning quickly and never burning is not an indication that you are immune to the dangers of the sun.

I have a high SPF number lotion, so I'm protected – SPF (Sun Protection Factor) only applies to protection against UVB rays that cause sunburn. In order to protect yourself against the skin-damaging UVA rays as well you will need to make sure your lotion has the words 'broad spectrum' somewhere on the bottle.

I'm going to finish up last year's sun tan lotion before I buy

a new bottle – The active ingredients in sunscreen deteriorate over time and lose their ability to protect our skin. Also an open bottle can grow germs as the preservatives in the lotion lose their efficacy too. Check storage instructions on the bottle as well. Heat often degrades sunscreen meaning lotion kept in the glove compartment or your beach bag may become ineffective over time.

I have sunscreen in my moisturizer – Many facial moisturizers have an SPF in them, however we often don't wear enough, or re-apply it enough, to make it effective. Experts suggest applying a sunscreen under your makeup for best protection.

I only need a dab of lotion – The rule of thumb for the amount of lotion you should be using is about a shot glass full of sunscreen to cover the whole body. Obviously, some bodies are larger than others but it is generally agreed that there is no such thing as too much sunscreen.

I put sunscreen on this morning, so I'm protected all day – The active ingredients in sunscreen are good for about two hours, less if you're sweating or swimming. Re-apply often and let it soak in for a few minutes before you dive back in the water.

It's OK, I put on waterproof sunscreen – Recently changed FDA rules no longer allow the words "waterproof", "sweat proof" or "sun block" on sunscreen bottles. Instead, manufacturers can only claim, based on testing, that their product is water resistant for either 40 or 80 minutes. After that you need to reapply.

It's not sunny today, so I don't need sunscreen – UV rays easily penetrate haze, fog and cloud meaning it doesn't have to be warm and sunny to cause skin damage. UVA rays, responsible for skin aging, can cause damage through thick clouds and also glass.

How much SPF do I need? – Skin experts generally recommend an

SPF of at least 30. However, that doesn't mean that SPF 60 is twice as protective. SPF 30, when applied properly, can block out around 96 percent of sunburn causing rays. As the SPF number increase you only see a small increase in protection, around 98 percent with SPF 50 and under 99 percent with SPF 75. The strength of SPF does not change how often you need to reapply or how long you can be in the sun.

I'm re-applying new, high SPF sunscreen so I'm good to stay in the sun – Sunscreen can't block out 100 percent of the sun's damaging rays so you should also protect yourself in other ways with hats, sunglasses and protective clothing to minimize the damage. Just because you don't burn doesn't mean you've protected your skin. Once you've tanned, you've damaged your skin.

If I wear sunglasses at all, I just buy a cheap pair – Not protecting your eyes in the sun exposes you to a greater risk of cataracts, macular degeneration and skin cancer on the eyelids (which makes up 10 percent of skin cancers). Cheap sunglasses may not provide much, if any, protection against UV rays. Look for a pair that blocks 99 percent of UVA and UVB rays. If you're not sure your sunglasses are protecting you enough, you can take them to an eye doctor who should be able to scan the lenses to measure the protection they offer.

Sunburn happens

Aloe Vera has anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties to help soothe and heal sunburn. Pharmacies will have many varieties but try to look for the highest percentage of aloe possible, or better still cut the end off an aloe leaf and wipe the gel directly on the burn. The piece can be kept in the fridge for further applications.

A spoonful of honey not only helps the medicine go down, it is also hailed amongst other things as a healer of sunburn. Many studies have shown that its antibacterial and anti-

inflammatory properties can help to heal wounds so can be used as an effective sunburn reducer.

Until next time.

Mandy Kendall operates Health Connective in South Lake Tahoe, which aligns wellness seekers with their ideal wellness provider. If you have questions, would like some advice, or would like to request some Qwik-e tips on any health and well-being topic, drop her an email at connect@healthconnective.com or keep an eye out on Lake Tahoe News for regular Qwik-e tips on how to make healthy changes one Quick and Easy step at a time.