

## Sunscreens

Paulger & Wisniewski Dermatology, LLP

For questions or an appointment, call (806)797-1202

Sunscreens are topical agents that protect the skin from Ultraviolet light. They are not to be used to justify more time in the sun – that negates their purpose.

The effectiveness of sunscreen is expressed as the SPF (Sun Protection Factor). **Any sunscreen that claims to have an SPF of greater than 30 is no better than one that is around SPF 30.** This is just a marketing tool to get you to buy their product. An SPF of 15 gives 93% protection and an SPF of 34 gives 97% protection (so you get diminishing returns with greater SPF).

Use sunscreen with an **SPF 15 for daily use** (when you don't plan to be out for prolonged periods of time. I like Oil of Olay with SPF 15 since it is a light, less greasy, and contains Titanium Dioxide.)

Use an **SPF of 30+ if you are going to be out in the sun for long periods** of time (greater than 25 minutes)  
Apply sunscreen 15 to 30 minutes before going outdoors.  
Reapply every 2 hours after exposure to water.

Glass filters out UVB light but allows exposure to UVA -- so you can get sun damage from sitting next to windows at home or riding in your car.

I prefer that you use a sunscreen with either **Zinc Oxide or Titanium Dioxide** since these are physical blockers that reflect the sun and protect you from the greatest range of wavelengths of UV light. Many common brands will have one of these ingredients. Although they give you the best protection – be mindful that they also tend to be thicker, less transparent and leave a subtle white coating on your skin.

Even if you are using a sunscreen without Zinc or Titanium – you are still getting more benefit than if you did not use sunscreen at all.

Be sure to apply sunscreen to the bottom of your lip. There are many lip balms out there with SPF 15 or greater.

There are many good brands out there. I use Baby Magic (it's in a pink bottle) by Banana Boat. Other good brands are Neutrogena, Coppertone Sport, Elta Block, Blue Lizard.

Oil of Olay makes a good one for every day use with an SPF of 15.

There have been claims that sunscreens actually cause skin cancer. Most of this comes from a debate about vitamin D levels in the blood. Since our body produces vitamin D with sunlight – concerns have been raised about sunscreens causing low vitamin D in our bodies. Some studies suggest that Vitamin D lowers our risk for skin cancers and internal cancers. Since Vitamin D can be obtained through vitamin supplements – this should not even be an issue. I recommend taking 400-800 IU daily of Vitamin D along with 1500 mg of Calcium.