

## Sunscreens

### Fact Sheet

The major cause of damage to your skin is undoubtedly exposure to sunlight - specifically, the ultraviolet component of sunlight. It follows that the simplest and most effective thing you can do to maintain your youthful appearance is to protect yourself from the sun. Avoidance of sun is the best solution, but this may not always be possible (or indeed desirable). The next best thing is to wear a sunscreen, but with so many available, which one should you choose?

Firstly, a few scientific facts. Natural sunlight contains many different types of ultraviolet (UV) light, of which UVA and UVB are the most important. An easy way to remember the difference between them is that UVA is associated with Ageing, whilst UVB is associated with Burning. There is 30 times more UVA than UVB in sunlight, and UVA passes through glass, whereas UVB does not. This means that that natural light can damage unprotected skin even while you are indoors or in your car. UVA penetrates deeply into the skin, causing damage by forming free radicals, whilst UVB directly damages the DNA of the superficial layer of the skin. These are both very bad things!

Sunscreens are of two basic types; physical and chemical. Physical sunscreens scatter or reflect UV and do a great job of blocking both UVA and UVB. Made from natural minerals, they are extremely safe to use. We routinely apply a physical sunscreen (*Physical UV Defense SPF30*) to our clients' skin after laser or other non-surgical treatments. Indeed, we use this product ourselves every morning as part of our personal skin care regime.

Chemical sunscreens are somewhat different and, in our opinion, less satisfactory. Firstly, they are synthetic chemicals. They can be somewhat unstable (tending to become less active with the passage of time) and are a common cause of light sensitive allergic reactions in the skin. The major problem with chemical sunscreens, however, is that they are not as broad spectrum as physical sunscreens. No single chemical sunscreen can protect against *both* UVA and UVB. They therefore need to be mixed together and this can lead to stability problems.

You may be unclear as to what strength sunscreen you should choose. Sun Protection Factor (SPF) refers *only* to the ability of a sunscreen to protect against the harmful effects of UVB i.e. to prevent burning. A sunscreen with an SPF of 30 will in theory increase the time you can spend in the sun without getting burnt by a factor of thirty. BUT, and this is a big BUT, nobody ever puts on enough sunscreen (or reapplies it frequently enough) to actually achieve this level of protection. In reality, SPF 30 actually equates to an SPF of about 10. The other point to bear in mind is that

the longer you spend in the sun without burning, the more skin damage UVA is causing. This of course means more wrinkles, blemishes and most importantly an increased risk of skin cancer.

As of Spring 2008, there is no standardised rating for the UVA protection afforded by a sunscreen. Be wary of phrases such as 5 star UVA protection as they do not mean a great deal.

The perfect complement to an effective sunscreen is an antioxidant serum. Again, we use *CE Ferulic* antioxidant serum every day as the core of our skin care regime.

**You may also be interested in:**

Fact sheet on the role of topical antioxidants in skin protection, please click [here](#).

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talk to **me**

If you would like to discuss any aspect of this treatment please contact us on:

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