

EN BLOCK

Don't let your day at the beach turn into a bake-and-burn session. Slather on the sunscreen **NOW**. By Justina Tan

NOT ALL UV RAYS ARE THE SAME

There are two kinds of UV rays – UVB causes sunburn, while UVA leads to wrinkles, pigmentation, premature ageing and melanoma (skin cancer). Although UVA doesn't cause burning or discomfort, it penetrates skin 40 times deeper than UVB.

READ THE FINE PRINT

Your sunscreen should state that it provides broad spectrum protection, as SPF (Sun Protection Factor) only defends against UVB. There's no established rating for UVA protection. Some sunscreens use PA (protective rating ranges from “+” to “+++”), while others use PPD (Persistent Pigment Darkening), IPD (Immediate Pigment Darkening), star rating or UVA seal.

DON'T OBSESS OVER SPF

Sunscreens with a high SPF, like 70 or 100, don't work better than those with half the count. The difference between SPF 30 and SPF 50 is about one per cent. Those with fair skin or freckles should use SPF 50, while those with normal skin tones will do fine with SPF 30, says Dr Patrina Wong, a medical aesthetic director at LinC Aesthetic Clinic.

USE ENOUGH AND OFTEN

Applying an adequate amount is more important than how high your SPF is. Regardless of the number, the right amount to use (from head to toe) is equivalent to a shot glass. Reapply every two hours – sunscreen breaks down after that and reacts with UV rays to form free radicals. If you're perspiring profusely or swimming, reapply

every 80 minutes. For face and neck alone, a 20 cent-size or one FTU (fingertip unit – measured from the joint crease closest to the tip of your index finger) suffices. Consider a water-resistant sunscreen, because perspiration makes skin more photosensitive. Apply half an hour pre-sun exposure. Don't skip sunscreen even on cloudy days because 80 per cent of the sun's UV rays can pass through clouds.

CHOOSE THE RIGHT SUNSCREEN

Chemical blockers absorb UV rays and degrade faster in sunlight, while physical blockers like titanium and zinc oxide sit on the skin and act as an “umbrella” to deflect UV rays. Chemical blockers have better texture and are used in sunscreens with lighter textures, while physical ones have a chalky texture and are present in cream-based waterproof sunblocks with high SPF. Dr Calvin Chan, director of Calvin Chan Aesthetic & Laser Clinic, recommends that those with sensitive skin go for a purely physical sunscreen and layer on a mineral powder. Dr Jean Ho of Jean Ho Skin and Laser Clinic suggests that acne-prone skin opt for lightweight, oil-free sunscreens with chemical or physical blockers or a combination of both. A photo-stable formula is excellent as it doesn't break down easily in sunlight.

APPLY RIGHT

Gently press sunscreen onto skin instead of rubbing it on, rubbing may decrease its protective effect. It's best to apply two layers of sunscreen for more even coverage. Or, use a spray-on sunscreen.

SCREEN SAVERS

Something for every purpose... well, almost.

Face: **La Mer** The SPF 30 UV Protecting Fluid, \$133, is lightweight and rich in antioxidants.

Eyes: **Lancôme** UV Expert Bright Eyes Eye BB Base SPF 50/PA+++, \$68, addresses this thin and fragile area.

Lips: **Ettusais** Lip Essence SPF 18/PA++, \$31, protects your pout, so reapply often.

Even Out Skin Tone: **SK-II** Whitening Source DermDefinition UV Lotion SPF 50/PA+++, \$107, improves radiance and hydration and prevents spots.

Oily Skin: **Kiehl's** Dermatologist Solutions Ultra Light Daily UV Defense SPF 50/PA+++, \$95, has an ultra-light texture sans oil, fragrance and colour.

Sensitive Skin: **Neutrogena** Ultra Sheer Pure-Mild Sunblock Lotion SPF50+/PA+++, \$24.50, contains 100 per cent natural ingredients and contains only physical blockers.

Tinted: **La Roche-Posay** Anthelios XL SPF 50+ Tinted Cream, \$36.90, is so light and comfortable on skin.

Body: **Dermatologica** Multivitamin Bodyblock SPF 20, \$79, defends against sun exposure and hydrates and treats sun-damaged skin with vitamins.

Spray-On: **Nivea** Sun Invisible Protection Transparent Spray SPF 30/UVA/UVB, \$20.30, offers immediate and non-greasy coverage.

KIEHL'S DERMATOLOGIST SOLUTIONS ULTRA LIGHT DAILY UV DEFENSE, SK-II WHITENING SOURCE DERMDEFINITION UV LOTION, LA ROCHE-POSAY ANTHELIOS XL, LANCÔME UV EXPERT BRIGHT EYES EYE BB BASE, DERMATOLOGICA MULTIVITAMIN BODYBLOCK

