



www.dermcarecharlotte.com

(704) 341-0090 (Ballantyne) (704) 821-0615 (Indian Trail)

SUNSCREEN 101

At Dermatology Care of Charlotte, we understand the importance of protecting one's skin from the sun's damaging ultraviolet light radiation. With the numerous sunscreens available, however, it can sometimes be difficult to know which products to choose and how to use sunscreens properly.

The physicians at Dermatology Care of Charlotte recommend regular use of broad spectrum sunscreens for sun exposed skin to prevent skin cancer and premature aging of the skin. A sunscreen should be at least SPF 30; however, higher numbers do not protect more as long as it is applied properly. A sunscreen should also be broad spectrum (able to protect against both UVA and UVB). To ensure broad spectrum coverage, one must make sure that the sunscreen contains at least ONE of the following: avobenzone, Mexoryl, zinc oxide or titanium dioxide. Do not buy it if it doesn't contain one! For those who have sensitive skin, stick with ones that contain only zinc or titanium.

Most people do not apply enough sunscreen and apply too infrequently. Approximately one ounce (size of a shot glass) is recommended for an average sized adult to cover the entire body. This means that a typical tube of sunscreen should last for only 3 to 4 applications. Also, because sunscreen is slowly broken down by sunlight, you should apply sunscreen every 2 to 3 hours even if you are not sweating or swimming. Lastly, sunscreens should be combined with protective hats and other clothing and one should try to avoid the peak UV hours between 10 a.m. – 3 p.m.

Lately, there has also been controversy about the health benefits of vitamin D and whether sunscreens block us from getting the vitamin D that we need. We recommend that you continue to apply sunscreens but discuss with your doctor about having vitamin D levels drawn if you might be at risk of being vitamin D deficient (little daily exposure to UV light).

In summary, the doctors at Dermatology Care of Charlotte recommend to apply sunscreen prior to sun exposure and reapply every 2 to 3 hours. Avoid mid-day sun exposure and cover up with clothing when possible. Consider oral vitamin D supplements if strict sun protection practices are being used consistently. Ask your dermatologist if you have additional questions.