

Protect and preserve

The best thing you can do for your skin is to apply sun protection, writes **Meera Murugesan**

FORGET the lotions, potions, creams and serums that promise to prevent ageing. The best gift you can give your skin is to protect it from the sun.

Every second that we're exposed to the sun, our skin cells get damaged says Dr Chang Choong Chor, consultant dermatologist at Gleneagles Kuala Lumpur.

Fortunately, we have a very good immune system on our skin, a complex DNA repair mechanism. Every time cells are damaged, the DNA is immediately corrected but if we get exposed to too much sun for the body to handle, then we will start to see negative effects and these include sunburn, pigmentation, wrinkles and in the worst cases, skin cancer.

"That's why sun protection is the most important anti-ageing tool," says Dr Chang.

BE COVERED

Most Malaysians know the importance of sun protection but many do not realise that for best results, it's important to know how to choose a sunscreen and to apply it correctly.

Dr Chang advises consumers to look for a broad spectrum sunscreen that protects against both UVB and UVA rays.

UVB affects mainly the epidermis so people may get problems such as tanning and sunburn but UVA can penetrate deeper into the skin, and affect the collagen and elastic fibres in the skin. It not only results in wrinkles but also plays an important role

in causing skin cancer.

Dr Chang says it's also important to look for products that won't clog the pores and people with sensitive skin, eczema or a history of breaking out in rashes after using certain products, should pay extra attention to the ingredients listed.

For general purposes, a sunscreen with a Sun Protection Factor 15 should be adequate but those with a higher risk of skin cancer, or who are very prone to skin sensitivity after sun exposure, would need a higher protection level. Fair-skinned people, for example, are more sensitive to the sun and some people have certain diseases that make them more sensitive to sunlight, such as those suffering from lupus. These people need products with a higher SPF level.

"I sometimes recommend SPF50 and above for people who are worried about skin cancer or those who already have sun damaged skin," says Dr Chang.

USE IT RIGHT

Proper application is also

What it means

PA Rating

A sunscreen with a PA rating means it blocks UVA rays.

The more "+" signs it has, the higher the UVA protection. The maximum "+" sign a sunscreen can have is three.

Choosing a sunscreen

WHEN choosing a sunscreen, it's important to make sure that it offers long-lasting stable protection against both UVA and UVB rays. SPF protection alone is not enough as that measures protection against UVB rays only, not UVA. A combination of SPF and a PA rating (on a product) means protection against UVB and UVA rays respectively.

may be necessary to repeat applications throughout the day.

Dr Chang says if a person applies once in the morning and then goes to work and he or she works mostly indoors, then a once-a-day application should be fine.

"Sun protection is the most important anti-ageing tool."

Dr Chang Choong Chor

crucial. Always apply 30 minutes before sun exposure and apply liberally.

Most people tend to use too little, says Dr Chang. For example, if someone uses a product with SPF15 but doesn't apply enough, he or she won't even be getting that level of protection.

Application should also cover all areas exposed to the sun and besides the face, the upper chest, back and shoulders should not be missed.

Depending on the level of exposure, it



However, if they tend to be out and about all day long in the sun, they need to reapply every two hours.

He adds that sun protection is not just about using sunscreen

but also includes other tools such as umbrella, hat, sun-protective clothing, sunglasses and tinting of windows to block the sun's rays.

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DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SUNBLOCK AND SUNSCREEN

Sunblock = Physical sunscreen

- Deflects and scatters UV radiation
- Protects against UVB and UVA
- **Example:** Titanium dioxide, zinc oxide
- Suitable for sensitive skin.

Sunscreen = Chemical sunscreen

- Absorbs UV radiation
- Protects against UVB and also UVA (newer agents)
- **Example:** Benzophenones, avobenzones
- May cause contact allergy in certain individuals

OUT IN THE SUN

SPF measures how many times longer before the sunscreen-protected skin becomes red after exposure to UVB, compared to unprotected skin.

IF APPLIED APPROPRIATELY:

SPF15 blocks 92.5 per cent of UVB and is adequate for use on normal skin.

SPF30 blocks 97 per cent of UVB and is for photosensitive skin, skin cancer patients and people at higher risk of skin cancer.



Wearing a sunscreen is particularly important in completely exposed areas like the beach.

PROTECT YOUR SKIN

MOST Malaysian women understand the importance of sun protection but most dislike the thick, greasy texture of conventional sunscreens.

Understanding the need for a product that not only keeps skin hydrated but well protected from the sun while having an appealing, lightweight texture, Neutrogena has introduced its Hydro Boost Gel SPF30 PA++.

PROTECTION IN A BOTTLE

The product is the latest addition to the brand's best-selling hydrating skincare series — Hydro Boost. The gel provides dual benefits in one convenient pump bottle.

Hyaluronic acid and olive extract provide deep hydration to dry skin cells while broad spectrum UV filters (SPF30 PA++) keep skin well protected

from harsh environmental factors and harmful UVA and UVB rays, which darken skin and weaken its protective barrier.

Its refreshing, lightweight gel texture is designed to leave skin feeling comfortable even after long hours of application.

"It combines both hydration and sun protection in a bottle for ultimate convenience," says Cindra Tsai, group brand manager of Neutrogena at Johnson and Johnson.

The gel is dermatologist-tested, oil-free and non-comedogenic. It is priced at RM66.50 (40ml) and will be available at Watsons outlets.

Neutrogena's Hydro Boost Gel SPF30 PA++ provides hydration and sun protection.

