

Sun defence advice for smart people

It's the same every year - our brief summer arrives and hundreds of people rush to the park to expose their sun-starved skins, telling themselves it is the perfect way to prime themselves for a two-week break in the Med. Most forget their sun cream and end up with the telltale signs of over exposure - the indelible red raw scar of sunburn, or if you're slightly luckier, a tan.

But whether you're burning or tanning yourself, South Woodford skincare therapist **Virginia Williams** says each exposure to the sun increases our risk of permanent damage and premature ageing.

She says daily use of a Sun Protection Factor cream is vital to stave off the most harmful effects. UVA rays penetrate deep into the skin, and can lead to skin cancer as well as wrinkles. UVB rays are responsible for the burn or tan people yearn for, but are no less dangerous than UVA rays. They are the early warning system.

There are two types of sunscreen:-

Chemical – which absorbs UV rays, releasing energy as heat

Physical – to reflect energy rays, and tends to be less irritating.

An SPF 15 will block over 83% of UVB rays, while SPF 30 will block up to 96% of rays. SPFs higher than 30 will not give you any extra protection, but will have an increased level of chemicals which can cause irritation.

Skin is an excellent record keeper. Virginia Williams can look out for and monitor your skin for sun damage when she carries out a facial analysis under a special skincare lamp. She will see how sun exposure has damaged capillaries in the skin and caused age spots, but will also be able to advise you on how to slow down any further damage.

It is worth bearing in mind that skin cancers are on the rise in the UK, with more than 76,000 cases of non-melanoma cases being diagnosed each year. Many more could be going unreported, according to Cancer Research UK. Cases of malignant melanoma have quadrupled since the 1970s.

Even if you're just heading out to the shops or for a walk, it's still vital to protect your exposed skin against UVA and UVB. Follow these tips:

- Apply SPF 30 minutes before exposure to the sun
- If you are sensitive to sunscreens, a non-chemical sunscreen is recommended (look out for products with titanium dioxide or zinc oxide)
- Suncreams fortified with vitamins C & E may offer extra protection, as they are designed to **release antioxidants when exposed to UV light**.
- Although they might not burn quite so easily, people with dark skins actually absorb *more* UV rays, so protecting against sun damage and skin cancers is paramount.

So, what if you are going on holiday, and are still determined to get a tan? Virginia Williams says play it safe with the following additional tips:

- Each morning, before breakfast, drink a glass of **warm water** with a slice of **lemon**. This is an excellent tonic to flush out your digestive system, which will reflect on your skin.
- Dry body brush your skin** daily, starting at the base of your feet and always brushing lightly towards your heart to stimulate the flow of the lymphatic system.

- Before going on holiday, you may well have treated yourself to a **spray tan** to get yourself in the holiday mood! If you haven't, it is advisable to have this done to give your body a base colour before your skin is attacked by the hot rays, as well as for the feel-good factor.
- Ensure that you apply SPF every two hours - and keep topping it up every time you get in and out of the sea or pool. The sun's rays are more intense in tropical locations, so don't forget to do your eyelids, lips, nose and tops of the ears.
- Avoid sun exposure** between 10am – 3pm, when the sun is at its strongest. If you can't avoid going out between these times, wear a hat with a large brim, sunglasses with UV protection, and lashings of SPF!
- After being in the sun your skin will become very dehydrated, so always use a body moisturiser to replenish moisture levels.

Virginia Williams Skincare Studio can help to advise you on priming and protecting your skin in the sun. If you're going on holiday, why not indulge in her Pre- and Post Holiday packages. The pre-package includes spa pedicure, eyelash tint, bikini and underarm wax and body scrub. Post holiday, keep your glow for longer with the hydro-therapy body wrap, oxygenating facial and mini pedicure.

Tracey Virginia Williams is a CIDESCO-qualified therapist and graduate of the internationally-renowned Ray Cochrane Beauty School in central London. She runs the Virginia Williams Skincare Studio in Grove Hill, South Woodford, where she offers a wide variety of treatments.

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