

# women & cancer

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## SKIN CANCER

PREVENTION  
SCREENING  
TREATMENT

Paula Zahn

Caregiver and Advocate

**Breaking News**

**SAN ANTONIO BREAST CANCER SYMPOSIUM**





# What to Look for in a SUNSCREEN LABEL

By Debra Wattenberg, MD

Protecting your skin daily with sunscreen may sound simple enough, but when it comes to deciphering labels and choosing the most effective products available, you may start wishing you'd paid more attention in chemistry class. As you scan the tiny print of long, alien words, which ones do you want to find in the sunscreen you're using, and what do the various ratings mean? Dr. Wattenberg explains what SPF (sun protection factor) numbers mean for consumers and tells us about a few key ingredients to look for to make sure we're getting the best protection out there. She also reminds us of the importance of using sun protection on a daily basis: "Sunscreens should be used by everyone, every day. They should be applied at least 30 minutes prior to going outside, and they should be reapplied after swimming or heavy sweating."

The SPF rating measures the protection a sunscreen offers against UVB rays, [the ultraviolet radiation that causes sunburn.] It is a comparison of how long it takes unprotected skin to become red versus skin that is protected. An SPF of 15 or higher is considered acceptable UVB protection, however most studies are done with large quantities of the product. I therefore recommend using a higher number, as most people do not apply enough sunscreen. Currently, there is no approved UVA measurement. Possible UVA ratings include the persistent pigment darkening (PPD) test and the PFA (the protection factor in UVA).

**CHOOSE SUNSCREENS THAT CONTAIN  
THE FOLLOWING INGREDIENTS:**

**UVA blockers • UVB blockers**

**A combination UVA and UVB sunscreens**

**Mexoryl® (ecamsule) Avobenzone**

**Oxybenzone • Octocylene**

**Physical blockers such as  
zinc oxide and titanium oxide**



WOOLRICH CHATHAM FLATS CAP  
and ZEAL OPTICS DIGNITY SUNGLASSES  
COOLIBAR SUN SHAWL

## 5 recommended sunscreens continued from page 61

These five sunscreens are recommended by the Skin Cancer Foundation. To view a complete list of product that have earned the Skin Cancer Foundation's Seal of Recommendation, visit [www.skincancer.org/images/stories/documents/sealcombined.pdf](http://www.skincancer.org/images/stories/documents/sealcombined.pdf).

Sunscreens qualifying for this list have met the following criteria:

- A sun protection factor (SPF) of 15 or greater
- Validation of the SPF number by testing on 20 people
- Acceptable test results for phototoxic reactions and contact irritation
- Substantiation for any claims that a sunscreen is water- or sweat-resistant

For more information about sunscreens and other products that have been proven to provide effective protection against UV rays and to learn about options that best suit your personal needs, consult your dermatologist.



IT'S THE NUMBER  
ONE RULE OF SUN  
SAFETY, AND THE  
RIGHT PRODUCTS  
HELP YOU DO IT  
WITH COMFORT  
AND STYLE.

# Cover Up!

BY MIA JAMES

**A**lthough sunscreen continues to make the list of ways to protect your skin from the sun's harmful ultraviolet (UV) rays, the most comprehensive defense begins with physically covering as much skin as possible. Debra Wattenberg, MD, a New York City dermatologist whose specialties include prevention and early detection of skin cancer, explains: "Sun protection shouldn't stop with sunscreen. It is important to physically block the sun from your skin." Suiting up in long-sleeved shirts (ideally with collars that can be turned up to protect your neck), long pants, and accessories like wide-brimmed hats and UV-protective sunglasses will limit direct sun exposure while you enjoy your time outdoors.

For the best shield from the sun, look for fabrics designed to give clothing an extra protective boost. "There is protective clothing that can be used to help prevent sun exposure. A typical summer shirt may provide an SPF [sun protection factor] of about 7; these shirts and other items will give protection around an SPF of 50," says Dr. Wattenberg of apparel developed specifically to prevent excessive sun exposure.

According to the Skin Cancer Foundation ([www.skincancer.org](http://www.skincancer.org)), the following factors determine a fabric's level of protection: tightness of weave, weight, type of fiber, and color. For optimal natural protection, clothing must leave the least amount of skin exposed (hence the importance of long-sleeved shirts and long pants). The Skin Cancer Foundation also explains how the UPF (ultraviolet protection factor) rating, which is used to indicate a fabric's level of protection, works: "A fabric with a rating of 50 will allow only



ABOVE

COOLIBAR SEASIDE HAT

([www.coolibar.com](http://www.coolibar.com))

ZEAL OPTICS DIGNITY SUNGLASSES

([www.zealoptics.com](http://www.zealoptics.com))

COLUMBIA SEASIDE STRETCH TUNIC

([www.columbia.com](http://www.columbia.com))

RIGHT

COOLIBAR ULTRA SPORT HAT

