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## Dos and Don'ts of Proper Suncare

Preventing sun damage is much more than just a cosmetic issue — protecting your skin could save your life.

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by Anne L. Fritz

More than one million cases of skin cancer were diagnosed in the United States in 2007, according to the American Cancer Society. Many of those cases might have been avoided, however, with proper preventive care.

Sunscreen is key, but effective coverage requires more effort than just slopping some lotion on when you arrive at the beach. Follow these tips to keep your skin healthy and sunburn-free:

**Don't forget to use sunscreen even when your day keeps you indoors.** Glass windows protect against sunburn-causing UVB rays but don't stop UVA rays, which suppress the immune system and result in wrinkles and brown spots. Be especially vigilant on days you will be driving a lot, as UVA rays can also penetrate car windshields and windows.

**Don't just apply sunscreen to the skin on your face.** Even if you're not at the beach or pool, it's especially important to apply sunscreen to your hands, décolletage, forearms, lips, and ears. These areas also receive sun exposure and are not only quick to show signs of aging, they are also vulnerable to the development of melanomas (cancerous tumors).

**Don't assume a "water-resistant" or "waterproof" sunscreen will last longer.** Even these formulas will wear off after 30 minutes or more spent in the water or after excessive sweating. They can also easily rub off when you towel-dry after a swim.

**Don't let shade give you a false sense of security.** According to Doris Day, MD, FAAD, and author of *Forget the Facelift*, you're not safe from sun exposure in winter, either: Snow can reflect 80 percent of the sun's rays. The sun's rays can not only penetrate through umbrellas and straw shades, they can also bounce off sand, water, concrete, and other reflective surfaces.

**Don't panic if you get sunburned.** Most burns can be treated with cool baths, moisturizers, over-the-counter hydrocortisone creams, and an anti-inflammatory, such as aspirin or ibuprofen. However, if you also have a headache, chills, or a fever, you may be suffering from heatstroke as well. Seek medical help immediately if this is the case.

**Do apply sunscreen (SPF 15 or greater) every day of the year.** On a gray day up to 80 percent of the sun's ultraviolet rays can still pass through clouds, says Dr. Day.

**Do slather it on before you go outside.** For maximum effectiveness, sunscreen needs to be fully absorbed into your skin. Apply it at least 15 to 30 minutes before heading outdoors.

**Do look for a seal of approval.** You want to use sunscreens that provide broad spectrum UV-coverage and carry the seal of the American Academy of Dermatology (AAD) and/or the Skin Cancer Foundation. Both organizations recognize sunscreens that contain the following:



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