

## Sun Smart fun in the sun

In the new South Africa, we are proud of our rainbow nation and as much as we enjoy carefree summer days we all need to take caution when spending time outdoors.

Although people are more aware of the dangers of the sun, most of us don't really know the difference between UVA and UVB rays. There are also a number of misconceptions when it comes to skin care such as people with darker skin tones don't need to wear sunscreen.

To help all South Africans get sun care smart, Clicks in conjunction with CANSA's Sun Smart Program have opened customer 'Sun Care' shops in select stores around the country. When deciding what sunscreen to purchase it's important to understand some of the basics. According to the Sun Smart Program, there is a difference between UVA and UVB rays.

UVB rays are the ones that are felt immediately, the ones that make your skin go red and in severe cases blister when you have been in the sun for too long, especially when unprotected. The UVA rays, however, are the less obvious but much more lethal ones; these are the rays that cause premature aging and skin cancer. This is why it is essential to ensure that your sunscreen has both UVA and UVB protection for all skin types.

Research has shown that the darker the skin tone the higher the resistance to UVA and UVB rays. This is clearly indicated (although not as a general rule - there are exceptions) through human evolution and how people indigenous to regions with more tropical climates and highest sun exposure have darker skin tones with thicker more densely pigmented skins when compared to those that live in colder areas. In countries such as South Africa, which have an equal summer/winter temperature split as well as such a diverse racial group there is no such thing as a blanket rule when it comes to skincare in summer.












It is essential therefore to know your skin type and how best to care for it when spending time outdoors over the December holiday period. There are four skin colour categories that are used when referring to the sun index; these are:

1. White skin that burns easily and tends not to tan
2. White skin that tans easily
3. Brown skin, and
4. Black skin

For those people who are unsure which category is theirs or feel that they are between two categories it is best to always opt for the paler and safer option i.e. lower category number.

One then also needs to consider the UV index, which is determined by the position of the sun in the sky and the amount of cloud cover in the sky. When the sun is at its highest, i.e. midday, the UV rays are at their strongest and most dangerous. Cloud cover also plays a large role with dense thick cloud protecting us from a certain proportion of UV rays and bizarrely, some thin cloud cover acting as a UV magnifier. This is why it is essential to check the UV index and not just the weather forecast.

How then does the UV index interpret for the different skin tones?

Index	White Skin Easily Burnt	White Skin Easily Tans	Brown Skin	Black Skin
 	low risk	Low risk	low risk	low risk
  	medium	low	low	low
  	high	medium	low	low
 	very high	high	medium	medium
	extremely high	high	high	medium

(information source *BBC Weather Centre World Weather*)

For more information speak to a pharmacist at select Clicks stores around the country who can advise you on the correct sun care products for your skin type and all the members of your family. Remember, you need protection before and during sun exposure, as well as after sun care. Sun information pamphlets are available at cash registers with useful advice on how to enjoy your time safely in the sun knowing that you are looking after your health, skin and hair with useful tips for children and sun care.

Visit <http://www.clicks.co.za> for more information on Clicks Sun Shops or call 0860 254 257 to find the Sun Shop closest to you.

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