

Summer skin care tips for those with darker skin

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Dermatologist [Dr. Caroline Opene](#) is often asked if certain types of sun

blocks are better for people with darker skin.

Not necessarily, says the director of the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) Health Skin of Color clinic.

"In general, the best sunscreen is the one you put on consistently," Opene said in a UCLA Health news release.

"While I recommend a broad-spectrum sunscreen with SPF 30 or higher for everyone, there are options: mineral sunscreens made with zinc oxide or [titanium dioxide](#) may be better for those with sensitive skin, and [young children](#). Zinc oxide also provides good UVA protection, so I tend to recommend it to those prone to hyperpigmentation," she added.

But these mineral sunscreens can sometimes leave an undesirable white cast on people with [darker skin](#) tones, Opene noted.

"While chemical sunscreens usually don't leave a cast, they can be irritating to those with [sensitive skin](#) or allergies. So for my patients with darker skin tones, I frequently recommend hybrid sunscreens, with both chemical and mineral filters for protection and improved blendability," Opene said.

Melanin, the dark pigment in skin, provides some protection against the sun's harmful rays, but not as much as people tend to think, Opene said.

"Those with medium to darker skin tones usually develop fewer pre-cancerous growths and have later onset of wrinkles that are due to sun damage. However, in these populations sun damage can present as uneven skin tone or dark spots," she noted.

Opene recommends a tinted broad-spectrum sunscreen to provide not only UVA and UVB protection, but also protection against visible light,

which is found both in daylight and in devices. It is a major driver of hyperpigmentation in people of color, she said.

"In general, those with fairer skin that sunburns easily are at highest risk for skin [cancer](#), as are those with a family history. That said, I have diagnosed a fair number of skin cancers on the face or hands of Asian, Latino or African American patients who have worked outdoors for many years," Opene said.

"People of color can also develop skin cancer in 'hidden' areas, such as the palms of the hands and bottoms of the feet," she warned.

Skin cancer is generally treatable if it is caught early, Opene said, adding that people of color often experience barriers to getting dermatologic care. By the time of a dermatologist visit, they tend to have more advanced stages of [skin cancer](#).

"It is especially important that all people check their own [skin](#) regularly for any irregular or changing moles and go to their doctor immediately if concerned," Opene said.

More information: The American Academy of Dermatology has more on [skin cancer](#) in people of color.

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