

Look for new, improved sunscreen labels

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Choosing effective sun protection should be easier now, experts say.

(HealthDay)—New labeling laws for sunscreen will help American consumers choose the product that provides the best sun protection, experts say.

The new labels must provide information about whether a sunscreen will protect against [skin cancer](#) in addition to sunburn, and will also have to indicate whether a sunscreen is water-resistant, according to the American Academy of Dermatology.

All sunscreens that do not meet the new U.S. [Food and Drug Administration](#) testing requirements have to have [warning labels](#) that outline their sun-protective limitations.

"Sunscreen has always been an important tool in the fight against skin

cancer, and these new regulations will greatly improve the consumer's ability to make smart decisions—at a glance—about a product's effectiveness simply by reading the label," dermatologist Dr. Zoe Draelos, a consulting professor at the Duke University School of Medicine, said in an academy news release.

"Everyone, regardless of skin color, can get skin cancer, which is why it is important for people to properly protect themselves from the sun's harmful rays," Draelos said.

To reduce your risk of skin cancer and early aging, the academy recommends using a sunscreen with the following features listed on the label:

- Broad spectrum, which means the sunscreen protects against UVB and UVA rays.
- A [sun protection factor](#) (SPF) of 30 or higher. SPF 15 is the FDA's minimum recommendation for protection, but the academy recommends an SPF of at least 30.
- Water-resistant for up to either 40 or 80 minutes. This means the sunscreen provides protection while swimming or sweating for the length of time listed on the label.

Sunscreen makers are no longer allowed to claim that a sunscreen is "waterproof" or "sweatproof" because the FDA has determined that those terms are misleading.

In addition to sunscreen, the academy recommends wearing sun-protective clothing, seeking shade and avoiding [tanning beds](#).

At current rates, one in five Americans will be diagnosed with skin cancer in their lifetime.

Sunscreen makers had until last December to comply with the new regulations, according to the FDA.

More information: The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has more about [sunscreens](#).

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