

sun savvy

When applied properly, sunscreen can help protect your skin from the harsh hazards of the sun. Since it's easy to forget the rules, tape these tips to the fridge for your whole family to follow.

- Find the right SPF. Don't know your SPF 15 from your SPF 60? "The number refers to how long you can stay out in the sun before you burn," says Dr. Ian Landells, a dermatologist in St. John's, Nfld. "If you generally burn in 20 minutes, which is pretty typical for a lot of people, SPF 15 means it would take 300 minutes. An SPF 30 would take 600 minutes, or 10 hours." But that's assuming you're not swimming, sweating or wearing clothes that cause friction against the lotion. Most dermatologists recommend using at least SPF 30 and reapplying it at least every two hours and after swimming or sweating – even if the bottle is labeled waterproof.
- Learn the teaspoon rule. "Use about one teaspoon of sunscreen for your face, two teaspoons for each arm, three teaspoons for your chest and back, and four teaspoons for each leg," suggests Dr. Peter Vignjevic, a dermatologist in Hamilton. The rule of thumb is, if you're using the same bottle of sunscreen as last year, you're not using enough.
- Time it right. "You want to apply it half an hour before going outside," says Dr. Lisa Kellett, a cosmetic dermatologist in Toronto. "And don't forget your eyelids, the backs of your ears, your neck and the tops of your feet – they're often missed."
- Remember your camp days. Teach kids the slip, slap, slop rule: Slip on a shirt, slap on a hat and slop on some sunscreen.

My everyday healthy choice is to wear sun-protective clothing – including long sleeves, long but cool pants and a wide-brimmed hat – on high exposure days.