

How to use sunscreens the right way

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(HealthDay)—Stick or spray-on sunscreens are essential tools against skin cancer, but it's important to use them the right way, a dermatologist says.

"Sticks are easy for under the eyes and the backs of the hands, while spray sunscreens are often easier to apply on children," Dr. Debra Wattenberg said in an American Academy of Dermatology news release.

"However, it's important to take precautions when using stick and spray sunscreens to ensure the best protection for you and your family," she added.

Wattenberg is an associate clinical professor of dermatology at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai in New York City.

As with lotion sunscreens, choose sticks and sprays that are broad-spectrum, water-resistant and have an SPF (sun-protection factor) of 30 or higher, Wattenberg said.

When using sticks, apply four passes back and forth on each area of [skin](#) to ensure ample protection. Then, rub the [sunscreen](#) in so there is an even layer of coverage.

When using sprays, hold the nozzle close to the skin and apply generously. A good rule of thumb is to spray until the skin glistens. Rub the spray in thoroughly to ensure there are no uncovered spots and coverage is even, Wattenberg said.

Never spray sunscreen near your face or mouth and do not inhale it. Spray your hands first and then use them to apply sunscreen to your face.

Don't use spray sunscreen on windy days because it's harder to apply and there's a greater chance of accidentally inhaling it. Never apply a [spray](#) sunscreen near heat or an open flame, or while smoking, and make sure it's thoroughly rubbed in and dry before going near open flames.

"No matter what type of sunscreen you use, make sure you reapply it every two hours when outdoors or immediately after swimming or sweating," Wattenberg said.

More information: The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more on [sun safety](#).

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