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Eight Times When You Need to Wear Sunscreen (But You Don't Know It)

Don't skip your sun protection.

By Rebecca Norris



If you're one of those people who keeps their sunscreen stored away until the summer season, we've got important news you need to hear: You should actually be wearing SPF every single day of the year. While some conditions certainly make the need for UV protection more of a priority—like a day spent at the beach or skiing down shiny white snow slopes between the peak hours of 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.—there are plenty of other times you might not even think to layer on the SPF when it's actually critical that you do so. To help you protect your skin (and subsequently prevent premature aging and the risk of skin cancer), we rounded up all the times you need to apply sunscreen.

When It's Cloudy Outside

"Even though it's cloudy and gloomy and you can't directly feel the sun, there are still harmful UV rays that can penetrate the clouds," says board-certified dermatologist and celebrity beauty expert [Anna Guanche](#). "So, if you head to the beach and think 'I don't have to wear sunscreen because it's overcast,' think again! These are the most dangerous times to skip sunscreen since you can't feel the radiant heat of the sun which reminds you to seek shade."

When You Get a Gel Manicure



"Don't forget that the little light that your hands slip into while you're getting a gel manicure is filled with harmful UV rays," Guanche reminds, noting that this is especially true of older gel lamp models. While newer lamps may have less damaging LED bulbs, she says that it never hurts to put sunscreen on your hands before popping them under the light. "Bi-monthly trips to the salon with unprotected UV exposure can lead to premature aging and skin cancer on your hands," she says, convincing us all to carry SPF hand cream from now on.

If You Choose to Go to the Tanning Salon

Though Guanche really wants you to think twice before going to the tanning salon—"Tanning in a bed has been shown to cause skin cancer, wrinkles, and premature aging. It is a terrible idea."—she acknowledges that there are some medical reasons why a doctor might recommend you visit one. "If your doctor has diagnosed you with seasonal affective disorder (SAD) and you need a few minutes in a tanning bed to feel better due to doctor's orders (yes, this is a real thing), then don't do it without protecting your skin first. Wear an SPF of at least 30 or higher and only go for a few minutes."

While Flying

"Up above the clouds, the air is thin and so is the atmosphere which helps to shield the sun," Guanche explains. "As a result, UV radiation is at its highest [some say it's equivalent to being in a tanning bed] and if you have the window shades open you can get sun damage." She adds that this also applies to astronauts. "When you get past the ozone layer, there is minimal UV protection," she says.

When You Visit Any Coral Reefs

"Yes, we all know that sunscreen is bleaching the coral reefs and we feel bad," Guanche says. "But this is no reason to skip sunscreen altogether. Many brands now make reef-safe sunscreen (such as Colorescience Sunforgettable Total Protection Brush-On SPF).

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