There is no such thing as a good tan

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A tan is a sign of ultraviolet damage to your skin. Continued sun exposure and tanning not only damages your skin - making you look older than you are - but also significantly increases your chances of developing skin cancers.

So the first step in protecting yourself is using sunblock.

Here are some ways to find and use the right protection.

• Use SPF 30 sunblock. The best advice is to use sunscreen with an SPF of 30 in adequate amounts before you are exposed to the sun. You should apply at least a shot glass full of sunscreen to your entire body prior to going out into the sun and reapply the sunscreen at least every 2-3 hours or more often if you've been sweating.

• Use UVA and UVB sunblock. Since sunlight is made up of UVA and UVB rays, make sure to use sunscreen that protects against both types of rays.

• Avoid tanning oil. Using tanning oil instead of applying sunscreen when you are participating in outdoor activities is a huge mistake since oil provides absolutely no sun protection.

• Pay special attention to your feet and ankles. These areas are especially susceptible because sunscreen can easily be accidentally rubbed or washed off.

• Use SPF 30 lip balm. Additionally, use a lip balm that contains sun block with an SPF of 30 in it and try not to lick your lips too often.

Also, many people have a reaction to the products in sunscreens themselves. You may need to test different products made especially for sensitive skin that don't contain extraneous chemicals to find the one that works the best on you.

Some to try may be Blue Lizard Australian Suncream or Neutrogena Sensitive Skin Sunblock.

The sunscreens made for children may also give you a better result than those for adults.

Wearing protective clothing

Wearing protective clothing and a hat also will help. Remember that sunlight can pass through loose-weave, light-colored clothing so wear densely woven, dark-colored clothing. You can also buy clothing with added UV protection, or you can add UV protection to existing clothing by washing it with a rinse made by RIT (Rit Sun Guard Laundry Treatment UV Protactant).

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