melanomaWA
Sunscreen Factsheet

How much to apply

You should aim for one teaspoon of sunscreen per limb, one each for the front and back of the torso, and one for the face, neck and ears. That's a total of seven teaspoons (if you intend to be outside with just your bathers on). **7 teaspoons is roughly a cupped handful.**

The Cancer Council recommends using SPF30 (or higher) broad-spectrum, water-resistant sunscreen. You should apply sunscreen at least 20 minutes before going outdoors and re-apply every two hours.

Chemical vs physical sunscreen

There are two types of sunscreen: chemical and physical. Chemical sunscreens work by absorbing UV radiation. They take about 20 minutes to sink in, and are resistant to sweat and water (unlike physical sunscreens) - a good option if you're going swimming or playing sport. The first application of chemical sunscreen should be applied before you leave the house. This provides time for the agents to soak in and bind to the Epidermis.

Don't leave it until you are sweaty or about to get wet - it will not be as effective. Physical sunscreens contain minerals (zinc oxide or titanium dioxide) and work to reflect and scatter UV radiation, providing you with a literal shield against the sun. These days, physical sunscreens contain nano-sized titanium dioxide particles and zinc oxide particles, which means you can block the UV without the white stripes. There have been concerns about the use of "nanoparticles" (tiny particles measured in nanometres - one nanometre is a millionth of a millimetre) and whether they can penetrate the skin and have a toxic effect. A 2016 review by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA), which regulates sunscreens sold in Australia, concluded that studies had shown nano-sized titanium dioxide and zinc oxide particles do not penetrate the underlying layers of skin, and that "on current evidence neither … are likely to cause harm when used as ingredients in sunscreens". The research continues.

Cancer Council Australia agrees with the assessment that on available evidence, nanoparticles do not pose a risk, but says it will continue to monitor new studies.

Sources:

www.abc.net.au/news/health/2016-11-17/summer-guide-to-sunscreen/8031134

www.tga.gov.au/literature-review-safety-titanium-dioxide-and-zinc-oxide-nanoparticles-sunscreens

When to apply sunscreen

The CCA's SunSmart app lets you know when you do and don't need sun protection, making it easier than ever to be smart about your sun exposure all year. Download it here: www.cancer.org.au/preventing-cancer/sun-protection/uv-alert/sunsmart-app.html