

Hello, It's Still Sunscreen Season!

Sun protection is a year-round commitment with a worth-it reward: much younger-looking skin. Discover a perfect winter formula (we'll help) and you'll actually want to use it.

BY KRISTA BENNETT DEMAIO PHOTOGRAPHED BY CHRISTOPHER COPPOLA

WHY YOU NEED SUNSCREEN NOW

Your defenses may be down

When the temperature dips, air loses moisture—and so does your skin. Dryness, in turn, can increase your risk of damage. “Skin that’s chafed or cracked has a broken barrier,” says Julie K. Salmon, M.D., an associate professor of medicine at Creighton University School of Medicine in Phoenix. That makes skin more prone to infection and irritation. By using a moisturizer with SPF daily, you can block incoming UV light and hold on to more moisture. “If you’re not outside much, not very active, and not so sun sensitive, it’s OK to apply broad-spectrum sunscreen just once in the morning,” says Salmon.

There’s no off-season for UV

You may not feel the sun as much right now, but look up—it’s still there. UVB rays, the ones that burn, are less intense at this time of year, but UVA, the longer wavelengths that accelerate skin’s aging and contribute to skin cancers, are still coming at you as strong as they were during the warmer months. “On a winter morning, you can get nearly as much UVA exposure as you would on a summer day,” says Salmon. These rays cut right through clouds, and if there’s snow on the ground, you have a good chance of getting a double dose of UV: Experts say white underfoot reflects nearly 80% of UV radiation. (For some perspective, sand reflects only about 15%.)

You get some exposure indoors, too

Those UVA rays are so strong they can penetrate right through untinted glass in your home, office, and car (windshields filter some of them; side windows, less). “Plus, we now know that visible light from lamps and overhead fixtures can activate pigment-producing cells,” says Rebecca Kazin, M.D., associate director of Washington Institute of Dermatologic Laser Surgery. That means if you’re prone to brown spots, you can get them just from sitting inside all day. Sunscreen can help protect your skin from visible light, but you need to pick the right kind (see opposite).

The damage is cumulative

A quick five-minute walk to grab lunch, the 10 minutes you spend clearing snow off your car, your 20-minute daily drive to work—these little moments outside can add up. *Don’t I need to get vitamin D from the sun?* you ask. While it’s true we get some from UVB rays (our bodies don’t make the vitamin unless bare skin is exposed to the sun), you can also get D through a D3 supplement if your levels are low. They can be checked with a simple blood test, says Sancy Leachman, M.D., Ph.D., director of the Melanoma Research Program at the Knight Cancer Institute.

Hey, mountain lovers! SPF is a must out there. UV exposure increases 4% to 5% every 1,000 feet above sea level, according to the Skin Cancer Foundation. So at an altitude of 10,000 feet, those rays may be 45% more intense.

FIND YOUR WINTER-FRIENDLY FORMULA

For everyone: To help skin hang on to its moisture this time of year, we all need a broad-spectrum SPF 30 with hydrators like hyaluronic acid and glycerin, or barrier-strengthening ingredients like niacinamide and colloidal oatmeal. Apply generously, says Kazin. “There should be a visible layer on your skin that needs to be rubbed in.” Two to try: **H2O+ Aquadefense Protective Matcha Moisturizer SPF 40** (\$48, [Ulta](#)) and **SkinCeuticals Ultimate UV Defense Lotion SPF 50** (\$40, [skinceuticals.com](#)).



MOISTURIZING



For sensitive types: Chemical filters (avobenzone and oxybenzone, for example) can irritate skin that’s already been beaten up by cold, dry air and wind. Zinc oxide, a physical filter, blocks UVA and UVB rays like chemicals do but is less irritating. And there’s a bonus: This mineral protects against visible light, too. We like **Neutrogena Sheer Zinc Face Dry-Touch Sunscreen SPF 50** (\$12, [neutrogena.com](#)) and **Colorescience Daily UV Protector Whipped Mineral Sunscreen SPF 30** (\$34, [sephora.com](#)).



MINERAL



There’s a lip balm hidden in the cap!

FOR HANDS + LIPS



For sneaky spots: Shield hands with a moisturizer offering broad-spectrum protection, like **Supergoop! Perfect Day 2-in-1 Everwear Lotion and Lip Shield** (\$19, [Sephora](#)). Lips are another forgotten zone. “Inflammation from dryness plus UV radiation is like a double hit for thin lip skin,” Leachman says. Swipe on a clear balm such as **Bare Republic SPF 30 Mineral Lip Balm in Dewberry** (\$4, [Target](#)) or **Eos Active Protection Lip Balm in Fresh Grapefruit with SPF 30** (\$4, [CVS](#)). They work alone or under your lipstick.