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SKIN CANCER BY THE NUMBERS

More than 2 million people will be diagnosed with the disease this year. Here's how to avoid being one of them. **by KARYN REPINSKI**

90

Percent of skin cancers caused by the sun's ultraviolet rays. The shorter UVB rays are more intense in the summer, but the longer UVA rays remain constant year-round—hence the need to apply sunscreen every day, rain or shine. Both types of UV light can cause skin cancer, but “A” rays are also responsible for wrinkles, brown spots, and other signs of skin aging. Don't count on overcast skies to protect you either, as 80 percent of UV penetrates haze, fog, and light clouds. “Unless it's so dark outside that you need a flashlight to see, you should be wearing sunscreen,” says Doris J. Day, M.D., clinical associate professor of dermatology at New York University Langone Medical Center.

30 Minimum SPF you should be using. To be effective against both UVA and UVB, your sunscreen must provide broad-spectrum protection (it will say so on the label).

1 OUNCE

The amount of sunscreen you should apply to your entire body to get the SPF promised on the label. Research shows the average person applies just one-quarter to one-half of that amount: “That means an SPF 30 is really an SPF 15 or 7,” says Steven Q. Wang, M.D., director of dermatologic surgery and dermatology at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in Basking Ridge, N.J.

15 MINUTES The length of time before going outside that you should apply sunscreen; this will give your skin enough time to absorb the protective ingredients. “Smooth it on as evenly as possible before getting dressed to avoid missing spots, especially areas near clothing edges that may move with exercise,” says Arielle Kaurar, M.D., clinical professor of dermatology at New York University Langone Medical Center.