

HERE COMES THE SUN

SPF is a skincare essential – but what to apply, when and where? Read on for the pros’ guide to spring sunscreen

Words **Verity Clark**

The sun care industry is shining bright.

So bright, in fact, that it’s forecasted to be worth more than £13 billion worldwide by 2027. But dermatologists still have their work cut out for them: a nation obsessed with skincare but averse to SPF. Riddle me that. With UV exposure responsible for 90 per cent of visible premature skin ageing — not to mention melanomas, UK rates of which have more than doubled since the 1990s — it’s a head-scratcher. The tide, however, is turning, not only with the rise of “sunfluencers” (TikTokers who educate on how to stay safe in the sun) but also with new SPF formulas that slot seamlessly into routines. “Gone are the days of a gloopy, white cast,” says the consultant dermatologist Dr Alexis Granite. “Beyond creams and lotions, there are tints, gels, serums, mousses and mists — meaning there really is a sunscreen for every skin type and routine.”

YOUR FIVE-STEP SPRING SPF PLAN

1 CHECK THE (SPF) WEATHER

“Official UK guidance is to wear SPF if the UV index is greater than three,” says

the dermatologist Dr Cristina Psomadakis.

Most phone weather apps offer information on the index, often broken down into levels, with moderate/medium being levels three to five. The index was introduced as a way to reduce skin cancer. Under level three? Don’t be complacent. “UV exposure still leads to pigmentation and skin ageing,” Psomadakis says.

2 BETTER STILL, ALWAYS USE PROTECTION

“An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure,” Granite says. “But I’m in Ipswich not Ibiza,” we hear you cry. It doesn’t matter, reply the derms. If you usually only reach for the SPF when temperatures are north of 20C, know this: “UV light impacts our skin in both cold and warm weather and even on cloudy days,” according to Granite, and, scarily, “sun damage is cumulative over time.” Bad news for long-time avoiders, but, say the experts, it’s never too late to start.

3 MORE REALLY IS MORE

Although lots of moisturisers and even foundations now contain SPF, getting the right level of protection is a little more complicated than just wearing make-up. “The SPF number on a product, whether moisturiser, foundation or sunscreen, is dependent on using a specific quantity,”



Psomadakis says. The official guidelines state you need 2mg per square centimetre of skin. For your face and neck that means roughly half a teaspoon or two lines of product the length of your finger. Two fingers of foundation is some pretty hefty (read: cakey) coverage.

4 DON'T SKIP THE SMALL STUFF

When it comes to SPF application placement is key. "People often avoid the eye area, neck and décolleté, which are all common area for skin cancers," says the consultant dermatologist Dr Emma Wedgeworth. Other areas to cream up that are easily forgotten? "The ears, back of the ears and bald heads," Psomadakis says.

5 MEET YOUR SPF MATCH

Forget thick, sticky, residue-leaving SPF. The new-gen sunscreens feel like serums, act like moisturisers and protect like an SPF should.

IF YOU HAVE SENSITIVE SKIN ... CHOOSE A MINERAL-BASED SPF

These formulas contain zinc oxide or titanium dioxide and form a physical barrier over the skin (unlike a chemical SPF that sinks in and absorbs UV energy). "They tend to be more tolerable for people with sensitive skin," Psomadakis says.

TRY Supergoop! Mineral Matte Screen SPF 30 (1 £34). A favourite in the States, this oil-free formula has just hit UK shores. As well as giving broad-spectrum protection, the cream has added bamboo extract to feed skin with antioxidants. As the name suggests, it's a matte finish so it makes a great make-up primer too.

IF YOU HAVE ACNE-PRONE SKIN ... CHOOSE AN OIL-FREE, NON-COMEDOGENIC FORMULATION

On TikTok there are more than 26 million views for "best SPFs for acne-prone skin", and although it can be tempting to skip SPF for fear it will congest your skin further, trust the derms (and TikTok) and include one in your daily routine. "There are plenty of products

that won't cause breakouts," Wedgeworth says.

TRY La Roche-Posay Anthelios UV Mune 400 Oil Control Fluid SPF 50+ (2 £20) has been designed for blemish-prone skin. Non-greasy, lightweight and imperceptible, it melts into skin and crucially doesn't sit in pores, meaning there's no irritation or flare-ups.

IF YOU HAVE OILY SKIN ... CHOOSE SOMETHING LIGHTWEIGHT AND OIL FREE

Gels and light lotions are best for oily complexions. "You can even skip moisturiser altogether and rely on the moisturising ingredients that form the base of the sunscreen," Psomadakis says.

TRY The Inkey List Polyglutamic Acid Dewy Sunscreen SPF 30 (3 £15)

This SPF version of the much-hyped polyglutamic serum from the affordable (and brilliant) skincare brand is a bit of a sunscreen breakthrough. The gel texture glides on, provides all the moisture-locking benefits of the OG serum and obviously you get sun protection too. It doesn't pill under make-up either, which is a big sunscreen tick.

IF YOU HAVE DRY SKIN ... CHOOSE A QUENCHING (NOT CLOYING) FORMULA

The pros recommend lotions and creams for drier types and suggest opting for fragrance-free products that are less likely to irritate. Don't be seduced by heavy formulas — they don't necessarily mean better hydration.

TRY Byoma Moisturizing Gel-Cream SPF 30 (4 £15) is the first SPF from this British brand that focuses primarily on the skin barrier. It contains hyaluronic acid and beta glucan, and with its serum-like texture is moisturising and then some — all while providing broad-spectrum protection. ■



THE THREE SUNFLUENCERS TO FOLLOW

#Suncare now has more than 100 million views on TikTok alone, and you'll find dermatologists and cosmetic scientists busting sunscreen myths, as well as doctors calling out the SPF cynics all over social media. These are our three favourite sunfluencers.

FOR HARSH TRUTHS

Dr Cristina Psomadakis is a dermatologist who doesn't mince her words. From sharing images of sun-damaged faces and bodies that will whip you into wearing SPF everyday, to dispensing practical advice for spotting signs of potentially dangerous sun damage, she has your suncare woes covered.

@dr.somaskin

FOR MYTH BUSTING

So dedicated is the Australian cosmetic scientist Michelle Wong to dispelling common SPF myths and mistakes that her Twitter bio reads: "professional SPF video maker". Got a formulation or ingredient query? Wong is your woman.

@labmuffinbeautyscience

FOR BLACK SKIN SUNCARE ADVICE

The New York-based aesthetician and skincare specialist Tiara Willis tests sunscreens using the "two-finger rule" test — applying that amount to her face to see whether formulas work for darker skins. Spoiler: she's not afraid to call out those that don't stand up under scrutiny. **@thetiarawillis**



