



Lucky Ol' Sun

Sunscreens

“Keep the wrinkles away... block UVA.”

In relation to our skin... the sun reminds me of the classic western movie “The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly.”

The Good: Vitamin D, and the improvement or clearing up of many skin diseases.

The Bad: Skin cancer and pre-cancers.

The Ugly: Aged, leathery skin with uneven color, damaged blood vessels, and fine wrinkles. A weakened immune system making us more susceptible to internal cancer.

The “perfect” sunscreen does not exist, but products are getting better and better every year. In my opinion, the weak link in ultraviolet light protection with sunscreens currently available relates to limited UVA-1 protection. Let me explain:

First you have to understand ultraviolet light - remember the electromagnetic spectrum we had to memorize in school?

Gamma Rays

X-Rays

Ultraviolet Light

Visible Light

Infrared

Radio/Microwaves

Ultraviolet Light (UV) can then be divided into four parts. From shortest to longest wavelength they are:

UVC: Blocked by the ozone layer, it is normally of no significance to us.

UVB: The “SPF” number on sunscreen/moisturizer products refers to UVB protection. Properly applied, SPF 15 blocks 93% of UVB. UVB causes skin cancer and pre-cancer.

UVA 2 and UVA 1: Currently, there is no UVA protection rating system. Dermatologists would like to see a numeric system similar to the SPF number for UVB. UVA causes skin cancer and is the primary cause of photo-aging of our skin.

Many sunscreen ingredients are available for UVB and UVA 2 protection, but only two currently are available for UVA 1 protection... **zinc oxide** and **avobenzone (Parsol**

1789). It amazes me that there are still many sunscreen/moisturizer products on the market that **do not** contain either of these agents. It reminds me of the shoddy car from Yugoslavia that we all remember! I would like to see products that contain **both** of these agents, but currently none exist to my knowledge.

For further information on sunscreens, visit the excellent Skin Cancer Foundation website: www.skincancer.org.