

## Taking Precautions During the Sunning Season

Written by admin  
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By Beverly Price

Now that the “Sunning Season” is here, it is wise to protect the skin that is exposed to the sun. But there are two important myths about sunscreen that most Americans don’t know. Myth #1: putting on more sunscreen will prevent skin cancer and Myth #2: the higher the SPF (sun protection factor) the better.

In June 2011 the FDA issued new labeling regulations to take effect this June (the deadline has now been extended). Yes, the US considers sunscreen a drug and therefore the oversight by the Food and Drug Administration. But just what do those regulations require? There are five of them and they basically deal with the way the sunscreen is presented on the label.

1. The words “broad spectrum” may not be used on the label unless the sunscreen guards against both UVA and UVB (two types of ultraviolet radiation) equally. Any sunscreen that protects only against UVB is still legal, just may not be labeled “broad spectrum.”
2. SPF has to be more clearly defined. Many people assume that SPF is protection against skin cancer, but it is not. It merely refers to the measure of a sunscreen’s ability to protect the skin from reddening. For example, if it takes 20 minutes for the skin to turn red without sunscreen, then it will take 15 times that long — 5 hours — with an SPF 15.
3. The label must be specific about “Use as Directed” and must carry a “Drug Facts” box on the label. Most folks do not apply sunscreen correctly.
4. The claims of “waterproof” and “sweatproof” will not be allowed. The strongest language permitted by the FDA will be “water resistant.”
5. Only certain sunscreen products are involved. Products that are sprayed on or wiped on with towelettes are not regulated.

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Steven Q. Wang, MD, director of dermatologic surgery and dermatology at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center, specializes in skin cancers. His website, [www.SunscreenGuide.com](http://www.SunscreenGuide.com), contains a vast array of information on the subject.

*Beverly Price is the owner/operator of the [Arizona Wildflowers](#), located in one of the sunniest spots in the nation would be credible.*

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