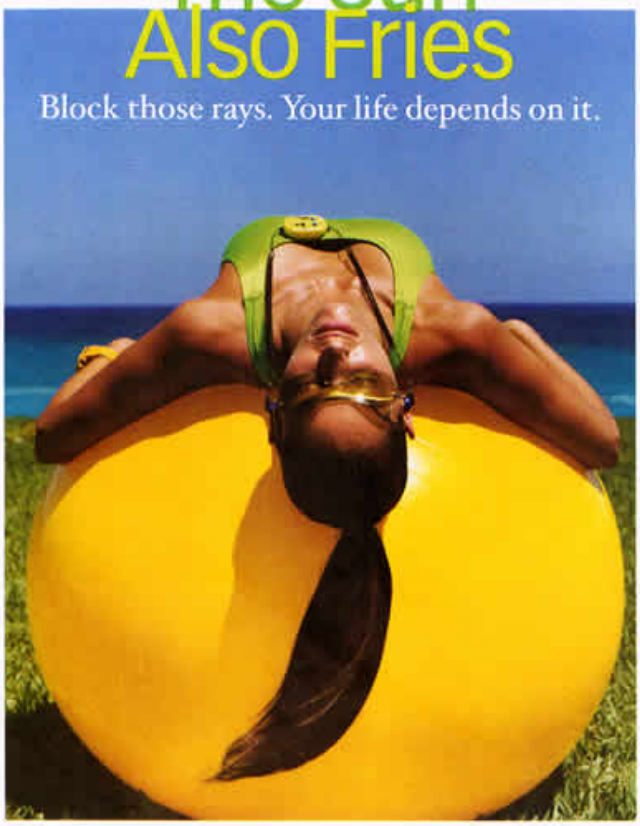
PRACTICAL MATTERS

STRATEGIES AND DETAILS FOR ▸ **BEAUTY** ▸ FASHION ▸ FOOD

The Sun Also Fries

Block those rays. Your life depends on it.



FEW OF US SLATHER ourselves with sunblock every time we head outside, but new research on the worsening environment calls for stronger protection against UVA and UVB rays. New York City dermatologist Patricia Wexler offers a full-body sun-safety guide.

NUMBERS DON'T LIE

"I absolutely believe that people spending a lot of time outdoors should use an SPF-30 product that's waterproof. SPF-15 products are good for everyday use—if you're going from the house to the car, or the car to the office.

"But people with a history of skin cancer or with fair skin should be using SPF 30 all the time. Sunblocks with an SPF of, say, 4 or 8 are just ridiculous—they're like using a condom with a hole in it. If the SPF isn't at least 15, it's pointless.

"Something most people don't know is that an average white cotton T-shirt gives you protection of only about SPF 8. If you're going outside in that shirt, you still need to apply sunblock to your chest, back, and abdomen.

"In clinical situations where an SPF-15 product was placed on one arm and an SPF-30 on the other, the two arms showed a significant difference in sun damage. You're going to start seeing a lot more SPF-30 products on the market based on these clinical observations."

BLINDING INSIGHT

"I've just seen three cases of melanoma of the retina. I'm not saying that it's a huge epidemic, but if I've seen three cases it can't be that rare. The more common problem is a gradual loss of vision. People should protect their eyes with dark lenses that have UV protection—not those silly lightly tinted ones—especially if their eyes are blue or green."

SPREAD THE WORD

"Depressing but true: Ninety percent of chronic sun damage happens before the age of 19. You're just not thinking about sun damage when you're younger. But if you're a mother, you should be covering your children with sunscreen before they go outdoors."

HAIR TRIGGER

"Spending a lot of time in the sun without a hat or a hair-sunscreen product can make your hair dry and brittle. The sun starts an oxidation process that makes it change color and texture, especially if it has been color treated. After you've been in the sun, make sure you put on a moisturizing product, like a leave-in conditioner with vitamin E."

STANDOUTS

"The most common areas for skin cancer now are the lips, nose, and ears—the parts that stick out on the face and that people don't think about covering with sunscreen. Wearing a hat with a wide brim—not a baseball cap—can help. We're also starting to see a lot of lip balms with high SPF." **–Andrea Dawn Clark**

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