

WELLBEING

Just your TYPE

The first step towards protecting yourself from sun damage is to know your skin type and its limits. Our handy A-list guide will help

Are you a fair maiden or a dark knight? Dermatologists use something called the Fitzpatrick Classification Scale to identify different complexions according to the amount of naturally protective melanin pigment found in the skin, eyes and hair. It comprises six categories that span from Very Fair (Type I) to Very Dark (Type VI), and takes into account your eye, hair and natural skin colour, and how your skin reacts when exposed to sunlight.

By determining your skin type, you can work out how much protection you need to stay safe in the sun. And for the 50 per cent of Britons who have Type II fair skin that burns quickly and easily, that means wearing a minimum SPF20. Applied thickly, SPF20 will block around 97.5 per cent of the sun's

TO HELP YOU IDENTIFY YOUR SKIN TYPE, DECIDE WHICH CELEBRITY YOU MOST CLOSELY RESEMBLE...

Type I – Very Fair, Never Tans

Nicole Kidman and Julianne Moore
Light blue, grey or green eyes, blonde or sandy red hair and pale skin that always burns.

Type II – Fair, Very Slowly Tans

Gwyneth Paltrow and Scarlett Johansson
Blue eyes and dark blonde hair, skin burns before getting a pale tan.

Type III – Medium Skin That Tans

Jennifer Lopez and Penélope Cruz
Medium brown hair and naturally brown or hazel eyes and skin that can burn but always tans.

Type IV – Mediterranean Skin, Tans With Ease

Jennifer Aniston and Gisele Bündchen
Usually have brown eyes and dark brown hair with golden skin that tans easily.

Type V – Middle Eastern, Asian, Indian and Light Black

Halle Berry and Freida Pinto

Naturally tanned skin that rarely burns, dark brown hair and dark brown eyes.

Type VI – Black

Beyoncé Knowles and Rihanna

Skin that easily darkens and only burns if left unprotected for long periods, with dark brown hair and eyes.



TYPE I – Nicole Kidman



TYPE II – Gwyneth Paltrow



TYPE III – Jennifer Lopez



TYPE IV – Jennifer Aniston



TYPE V – Halle Berry



TYPE VI – Rihanna



rays, and unless you have naturally dark skin that rarely burns it is unwise to wear anything lower.

Determining your skin type is now easier thanks to the British Association of Dermatologists, which has joined forces with the Met Office to create the World UV app, enabling users to check their skin against photos of the different types. By downloading the app for free from the Apple iTunes store, you will also have access to a live UV reading for 10,000 locations around the world and, tailored to that reading, sensible advice on how to stay sun safe.

The key to using the app successfully is to be honest about what your skin would look like without either a fake or real tan, so you will need to check an area that isn't normally exposed to the sun – the inside of your upper arm, for instance. To help, we have matched the different types to some famous faces. Simply choose the celebrity whose skin, hair and eye colour you most closely resemble from the above list.

DAMAGE LIMITATION

It is commonly believed that you have to burn your skin to damage it, but this is not actually the case. "Skin doesn't have to burn to be at risk from the sun, so just because you're not peeling doesn't mean that your skin is not being damaged," explains Professor Antony Young, an expert in UV-induced skin damage at St John's Institute of Dermatology, King's College London.

And if you think that only those who sunbathe

all day, every day, all summer long are at risk from the effects of UV exposure then think again. Recent research has shown that just a tenth of the time it takes to turn your skin pink is all it needs to activate your skin's production of collagenase, which breaks down collagen, leading to skin ageing.

Your best defence against UV-induced skin damage is to use a high SPF sun block at all times, a message that needs to get through, because the best-selling SPF cream in the UK is still only a Factor 8. Better news is that sun protection products get more effective every year. But creams can only do their job if we apply them properly, which is where many of us fail.

"None of us should rely on sunscreens alone to protect our skins," advises Professor Brian Diffey, the University of Newcastle's Emeritus Professor of Photobiology. "Studies show that the coverage achieved when we apply sunscreens is patchy at best, and that we often miss bits of skin completely. The end result is that we usually end up with around a third of the protection of that stated on the bottle."

Follow our guide on the key ingredients to protecting your skin in the sun:

BROWNIE POINTS

Lotion – Used properly all over the body, a bottle of sun lotion should last just a few applications – three to six, depending on the size of the bottle. Don't scrimp on sun protection; take two 150ml bottles for each week you spend abroad or in strong sunshine.

SPF – This is an indication of the level of sunscreens in your lotion, and a minimum SPF15

is recommended at all times. The number is a measurement of the amount of time you should be able to spend in the sun without burning. So if your skin would burn in five minutes without any protection, then by wearing an SP15 you should be able to last 15 times that long.

Label – It is not just about the SPF, and the best suncreams will also have photo-stable sun filters that last all day, offer broad spectrum protection against UVA and UVB rays, and feature added antioxidants to further protect your skin.

Limits – Stay out of the sun between 12pm and 3pm and do not rely on suncream alone to protect yourself: wear a hat, sunglasses and a T-shirt or sarong at midday.

Date – A recent study by online beauty retailer Escentual found that 75 per cent of people take out-of-date suncreams on holiday with them. Once opened, manufacturers only guarantee the SPF printed on the label for a year, so beware keeping odds and ends of leftover sun protection products at the back of your cupboards to use next year. While most sun filters are stable for up to five years, there is no guarantee that they will offer the same standard of protection for the entire time.

Tablets – Supplements that claim to prep skin for sun often contain a mix of antioxidants like lycopene from tomatoes and betacarotene from orange fruit and veg – but can cost a pretty penny. Not so Holland & Barrett Tan Tablets, £5.99, which contain vitamins and minerals as well as PABA and Tyrosine, two precursors to melanin production. Whilst they can never replace a topical SPF, or a well-balanced diet, they might offer extra protection. **H**