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## **OHIO STATE CANCER EXPERT SEPARATES FACTS OF SUN SAFETY FROM FICTION**

COLUMBUS, Ohio – From new “sunscreens” pills to a wide range of SPF numbers, consumers may be confused this summer when trying to protect themselves from the sun’s damaging effects.

“It can be confusing, but with a little knowledge, you can enjoy the sun safely this summer,” said [Dr. Shannon Trotter](#), a dermatologist and skin cancer expert at [The Ohio State University Comprehensive Cancer Center – Arthur G. James Cancer Hospital and Richard J. Solove Research Institute](#).

Trotter treats patients in the Cutaneous Oncology Center at OSUCCC–James. She said extensive research is underway to develop a true “sunburn pill,” but the pills on the market today are supplements, not drugs.

“Talk to your doctor before using them,” Trotter said, adding that there is no evidence that pills alone offer sufficient protection from the sun’s damaging rays. In addition these pills might interfere with other medications a person is taking.

“Some products have undergone some testing and have shown to be potentially preventive for sunburn, but more research is needed. We also need to learn more at the basic science level and to perform clinical trials,” Trotter said. “Those pills are not regulated by the FDA in the traditional sense like your blood pressure medication, for example, and they are not a substitute for protecting yourself with sunscreen.”

When it comes to sunscreen, Trotter cautions against using too little. “Some people mistakenly buy sunscreen with a higher SPF number, and then use less of it thinking they are adequately protected,” she said.

The SPF, or sun protection factor, is a laboratory measure of the effectiveness of sunscreen - the higher the SPF, the more protection a sunscreen offers against UV-B, which is the ultraviolet radiation that causes sunburn. According to the National Cancer Institute, most skin cancers form in older people on part of the body exposed to the sun. Sunlight causes damage to the skin through ultraviolet, or UV rays.

But SPF numbers can be deceiving, Trotter said. An SPF 15 blocks about 93 percent of harmful sun rays, and SPF 30 blocks about 97 percent, so buying higher numbers doesn’t necessarily mean that much more protection.

“Don’t fool yourself when you’re buying SPF 50 and above, thinking that you can be out longer and don’t need to reapply every 2 hours,” said Trotter, who is also an assistant professor-clinical in the Department of Internal Medicine, Division of Dermatology, at The Ohio State University College of Medicine.

Trotter says if you wear clothing as a cover up, avoid white.

“Darker shades, such as red or black, can increase your sun protection because they absorb ultraviolet light,” Trotter said. A white T-shirt, on the other hand has an [SPF less than 15](#) and offers less protection.

[The Ohio State University Comprehensive Cancer Center – Arthur G. James Cancer Hospital and Richard J. Solove Research Institute](#) strives to create a cancer-free world by integrating scientific research with excellence in education and patient-centered care, a strategy that leads to better methods of prevention, detection and treatment. Ohio State is one of only 41 [National Cancer Institute](#) (NCI)-designated Comprehensive Cancer Centers and one of only four centers funded by the NCI to conduct both phase I and phase II clinical trials. The NCI recently rated Ohio State’s cancer program as “exceptional,” the highest rating given by NCI survey teams. As the cancer program’s 228-bed adult patient-care component, The James is a “Top Hospital” as named by the Leapfrog Group and one of the top cancer hospitals in the nation as ranked by U.S. News & World Report.

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