SPF (Sun Protection Factor) is a measure of how well a sunscreen protects against Ultraviolet B (UVB) rays which are the major cause of sunburn and contribute to cancer. Broad-spectrum sunscreens also protect against UVA rays, which contribute to skin aging and cancer. The Skin Cancer Foundation says sun protection is key to skin cancer prevention. About 90% of non-melanoma skin cancers and 65% of melanomas are linked to exposure to UV radiation from the sun.

Whatever type of sunscreen you use, the American Academy of Dermatology offers these tips:
* Choose a sunscreen that has a SPF of 30 or higher, is water resistant and provides broad-spectrum protection from UVA and UVB rays. A SPF over 50 isn’t more effective than SPF 50 is.
* Apply generously 15 minutes before going outdoors.
* If using a spray sunscreen on children, spray it in your hand and then rub it into the child’s skin.
* Use enough – most adults need at least the amount you can hold in your palm to fully cover your body.
* Remember your neck, face, ears, tops of your feet and legs. Either put sunscreen on your scalp or wear a wide-brimmed hat if you have thinning hair. Use a lip balm with a SPF of at least 15 for your lips.
* Reapply sunscreen every two hours and immediately after swimming or sweating.
* Seek shade when possible and wear UV-blocking sunglasses.
* Remember the sun is strongest between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.

“People need to have a healthy respect for sun safety, and sunscreen is just one part of it,” says Jennifer Lucas MD, Dermatologist with the Cleveland Clinic. “I always tell people the sunscreen I like best is the one you’re actually willing to put on, as long as it has at least a 30 SPF, it is water resistant and broad-spectrum.”

For the complete report go to

Information provided by Marcia Schroeder RN at Horizon Public Health 320-208-6672.