

1<sup>st</sup> July 2015

## HPRA calls on consumers to check their sun creams

### MINIMUM AMOUNT OF SUN CREAM REQUIRED TO PROTECT YOUR SKIN SUFFICIENTLY

The Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA) today advised consumers to check that their sun creams are not past their safe usage date; contain the appropriate protection and to always apply at least the recommended amount of product for best protection. The HPRA states that as skin cancer is the most common form of cancer in Ireland, sun creams can provide important protection when used correctly. To ensure that sun creams provide protection against harmful UVA and UVB rays, it is urging consumers to carefully read the label on their product's packaging so they are best informed to maximise its effectiveness.

The HPRA states that there are thousands of sun creams on the market. Whilst no sun cream gives 100% protection from sun exposure, out of date, spoiled or insufficient amounts of sun cream can decrease the effectiveness of this health product.

It urges consumers to follow the packaging indications, apply appropriate amounts of sunscreen at least 20 minutes prior to exposure to the sun and to store the product correctly.

The HPRA advises:

**Amount:** The HPRA advises that the average sized adult should be using at the very least six full teaspoons of sun cream in order to give the indicated protection. Using quantities less than this will decrease the SPF/UVA protection of the product. For children, the minimum amount of sun cream is based on factors including height and weight of the child. Sun cream should always be applied 20 minutes before exposure to the sun and reapplied at a minimum of every two hours.

Age*	HPRA Advice - Minimum Number of teaspoons
2	2
5	3
9	4
13	5
Adult	6

**Use By:** The HPRA advises that there should be an open jar symbol on the packaging of sun creams that indicates the maximum time for which the product is safe to use once open. For example, if '24M' is on the symbol then this indicates a usage period of 24 months for which it is safe to use after opening.

If a sun cream has been opened the previous year and still within the timeline of the open jar symbol it should be checked to make sure it hasn't separated before using.

**Storage:** The HPRA advises that sun creams should be stored in a cool dry place away from direct sunlight or as detailed on the label of the product.

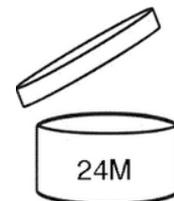


**When buying:** The HPRA advises consumers to only buy sun creams from a reputable source where the product can be traced to a supplier. It is advising consumers to:

- Check for a European address on the label of the sun cream, the absence of which may indicate that the product has been imported from outside the EU and may not meet European requirements for safety assessment.
- SPF (Sun Protection Factor) is a measure of a product's ability to prevent UVB rays from damaging the skin. Many sun cream labels contain a category of sun protection, 'low' (SPF 6 & 10), 'medium' (SPF 15, 20 & 25), 'high' (SPF 30 & 50) and 'very high' (SPF 50+). No product can provide 100% sun protection. Consumers should choose a level of protection appropriate for their skin type.
- A product that contains the EU recommended minimum level of UVA protection is labeled with a UVA logo as shown below. Consumers should check for this when buying a sun cream.

The regulation of cosmetics in Ireland falls under the remit of the HPRA which investigate any non-compliance with EU Regulations. According to Aoife Farrell, Cosmetics Compliance Manager, HPRA, no safety issues have arisen in relation to these products at this point, however she advises that given the particular health benefits effective sun screens provide, consumers should be mindful to make sure that they use their product to best effect.

"We would always advise people to check the UVA and UVB (SPF) protection on product labelling as both of these rays can cause damage. UVB radiation causes the skin to darken in colour, or in some instances, burn. UVA penetrates the skin further than UVB causing skin aging, resulting in wrinkles and pigmentation. Both forms of UV rays have the potential to cause skin cancer."



The market surveillance programme for cosmetic products, which includes sun creams and other similar products, is coordinated by the HPRA and the HSE's Environmental Health Service and Public Analysts' Laboratories.

***Tips for sensible sun exposure*** and further information on cosmetics can be found on [www.hpra.ie](http://www.hpra.ie)

**ENDS**

#### **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION**

- Weber Shandwick (01) 679 8600
- Siobhan Molloy / Orla Molloy 086 817 5066 / 087 770 5108

#### **NOTES TO EDITOR:**

\*These recommendations are guidance only. Adults and children should apply at least the guidance amount of sunscreen. Amounts are calculated based on the surface area of an average adult's skin of 1.8m<sup>2</sup> and the average weight and height of children at these ages (UK figures).

#### **ABOUT THE HEALTH PRODUCTS REGULATORY AUTHORITY**

The Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA) protects and enhances public health and animal health by regulating medicines, medical devices and other health products. The products under its remit include human and veterinary medicines, medical devices, blood and blood components, tissues and cells, organs for transplantation and cosmetics. Formerly known as the Irish Medicines Board (IMB), it became the Health Products Regulatory Authority on 1 July 2014.