

SKIN TONE ISN'T A SAFETY PASS

UV DOESN'T DISCRIMINATE

Your natural skin color is determined by the amount of melanin you inherit at birth: more melanin means darker skin, less means lighter skin. This has led to a dangerous myth, that people with darker skin don't need sunscreen, that they are somehow "immune" to the sun's damage. That belief is not just misleading; it is a potentially life-threatening lie that costs lives.

It is true that melanin provides some protection from UV radiation, acting as a natural buffer that absorbs and scatters rays before they penetrate deeply. For people with the darkest skin, this may be roughly equivalent to an SPF of about 13. But that is still far below the recommended SPF 30 or higher needed for adequate protection. Melanin can slow UV damage, but it does not block it entirely.

Because of higher melanin levels, people with darker skin burn less easily from UVB rays, creating a false sense of security. Many assume that no burn means no harm, but UVA rays still penetrate deeply, breaking down collagen, accelerating aging, and damaging DNA in skin cells. This damage increases the risk of all skin cancers, including melanoma, basal cell, and squamous cell carcinoma, even if the skin doesn't turn red.



While overall skin cancer rates are lower in people with darker skin, when it does occur, it is often diagnosed at a much later stage. Moles and lesions are harder to see, and both patients and providers may wrongly assume skin cancer is "not a concern" for people of color. This delay makes treatment harder and outcomes worse. The story of Bob Marley, who died from melanoma at age 36, is a tragic reminder that skin cancer can affect anyone, regardless of skin tone.

The takeaway is clear: darker skin offers some protection, but it is far from impervious. Sun protection is not optional for people of color; it is essential. Daily broad-spectrum sunscreen (SPF 30+), protective clothing, hats, sunglasses, shade, and regular skin checks are non-negotiable. Skin cancer does not discriminate, and neither should your protection.

