Applying Sunscreen à La Gwyneth Paltrow Could Put You at Risk for Skin Cancer

Gwyneth Paltrow says she is not a “head-to-toe slatherer of sunscreen” but dermatologists warn her technique increases skin cancer risk.

April 5, 2021 By Caroline Tien

Actress-turned-entrepreneur Gwyneth Paltrow is facing backlash after she applied sunscreen in a minimal manner that many dermatologists deemed irresponsible and even dangerous. Following suit, they warn, could put you at risk for premature aging and skin cancer.

Each year more than 3 million people in the United States are diagnosed with one of the three major types of skin cancer—basal cell carcinoma, squamous cell carcinoma and melanoma—according to the American Cancer Society. Risk factors include smoking and exposure to ultraviolet radiation.

In a video titled “Gwyneth Paltrow’s Guide to Everyday Skin Care and Wellness” posted to Vogue’s official YouTube channel March 30, Paltrow, the founder of the $250 million dollar lifestyle brand Goop, walks viewers through “the bulk of” her morning beauty routine. (Be warned: It’s extensive.) When she starts in on her SPF 30 sunscreen—it’s at 4 minutes and 39 seconds for those following at home—she coats only what are known as the “high points” of the face: the cheekbones, the bridge of the nose, the Cupid’s bow and the chin.

“I’m not a sort of head-to-toe slatherer of sunscreen,” she says as she does so, “but I like to put some kind of on my nose and the area where the sun really hits.”

Pointing out that partial coverage affords much less protection from sun damage than full coverage, dermatologists strenuously objected to her methodology. Contrary to popular belief, they told USA Today, skin cancer can develop anywhere on the face, not just the high points.

Around “80 to 90% of all skin cancers are on the face and neck,“ said Barry Goldman, MD, a clinical instructor at Cornell New York–Presbyterian Hospital. ”I’ve seen many tumors on the eyelids or around the eyes, the forehead. Basically, the whole face should be covered.... We think of the whole face as a high-risk area for skin cancer.“ Caroline Robinson, MD, a member of the faculty at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine, reinforced that taking your skin

care cues from the video and using sunscreen as ”a spot treatment, sparingly, or ‘just where the sun hits’…is a very dangerous message. The misconception that you only need to apply it to part of your exposed skin is harmful."

Skin cancer experts have been warning for years that most Americans apply significantly less sunscreen than is optimal for skin cancer prevention. According to the American Academy of Dermatology, most people apply only 25% to 50% of the recommended amount. The Food and Drug Administration, which regulates sunscreens, states, “An average-sized adult or child needs at least one ounce of sunscreen (about the amount it takes to fill a shot glass) to evenly cover the body from head to toe.”

At another point in the video, Paltrow derides “conventional sunscreen” as containing “really harsh chemicals.” This, too, is misleading, said Goldman. “There’s no real standard definition of ’clean’ and no real standard definition of ’natural,’” he said. “I wouldn’t want somebody who’s such a major influencer to be telling people not to use sunscreen because it’s maybe not the right sunscreen—the right sunscreen is the one you use.”

However, Paltrow will likely emerge unscathed; she is an old hand at weathering media storms by now. Since founding Goop in 2008, she has come under fire for everything from selling $66 jade eggs for vaginal insertion (for which the company was fined $145,000 for making “unsubstantiated marketing claims”) to singing the praises of vaginal steaming, which has been called “sorcery for your vagina.”

To learn about the best science-based approaches to protecting your skin from sun damage and skin cancer, read “Smarter Sun Protection.” For more on the ingredients in sunscreen, read “Do Chemicals in Sunscreen Cause Cancer?”

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http://beta.docker.cancerhealth.com/article/gwyneth-paltrow-sunscreen-advice-could-increase-risk-skin-cancer