

What's my skin type and why does it matter?

Most people are aware that certain types/hues of skin are at greater risk for sun damage and developing skin cancer. But, many people aren't aware that certain skin care products - including acne treatment products - are not recommended for certain hues and certain sensitivities. Do you know your skin type?

We classify skin type by way of the Fitzpatrick system. According to skincancer.org: "The Fitzpatrick Skin Type is a skin classification system first developed in 1975 by Thomas Fitzpatrick, MD, of Harvard Medical School. There are six skin photo types, going from light to dark. Individuals with skin types I and II face the

highest risk of developing skin cancer, while types V and VI are at the lowest risk. That is because those with more pigmentation have more natural protection from the sun. However, people with darker skin can still get skin cancer." Regardless, everyone needs to protect their skin from the sun!

Here is an easy way to determine your skin type, and by extension certain products you should avoid or at minimum test carefully on a small area of your skin before applying it to your face.

Fitzpatrick Skin Types



Step 1: Determine your Fitzpatrick Type

Find your number for each of the 8 characteristics below based on each description. Then tally your score.

Part I: Genetic Disposition		Part II: Reaction to Extended Sun Exposure	
<u>Eye color:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Light blue, light gray, light green = 0 • Blue, gray, green = 1 • Hazel, light brown = 2 • Dark brown = 3 • Brownish black = 4 	_____	<u>Your skin's response to the sun?</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Always burns, blisters and peels = 0 • Often burns, blisters and peels = 1 • Burns moderately = 2 • Burns rarely, if at all = 3 • Never burns = 4 	_____
<u>Natural hair color:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Red or light blonde = 0 • Blonde = 1 • Dark blonde or light brown = 2 • Dark brown = 3 • Black = 4 	_____	<u>Does your skin tan?</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Never - I always burn = 0 • Seldom = 1 • Sometimes = 2 • Often = 3 • Always = 4 	_____
<u>Natural skin color (before sun exposure):</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ivory white = 0 • Fair or pale = 1 • Fair to beige, w/gold undertone = 2 • Olive or light brown = 3 • Dark brown or black = 4 	_____	<u>How deeply do you tan?</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not at all or very little = 0 • Lightly = 1 • Moderately = 2 • Deeply = 3 • My skin is naturally dark = 4 	_____
<u>Freckles on unexposed areas:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many = 0 • Several = 1 • A few = 2 • Very few = 3 • None = 4 	_____	<u>How sensitive is your face to the sun?</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very sensitive = 0 • Sensitive = 1 • Normal = 2 • Resistant = 3 • Very resistant / never had a problem = 4 	_____
Total score for genetic disposition:	_____	Total score for reaction to sun exposure:	_____
Fitzpatrick Skin Type Score (total of columns 1 + 2): _____			

Go to Step 2 →

Step 2: Match your score to your Fitzpatrick skin type

Now, find where your total score lines up in the groupings below. The result is your Fitzpatrick Skin Type classification; this is an indication of your skin’s likelihood of burning when exposed to the sun or to UV radiation and can help to predict your risk of sun damage and skin cancer:

Fitzpatrick score	Characteristics	Celebrity example
I (0-6): Your skin always burns, never tans.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Very pale, light blonde or red hair, light eyes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Emma Stone• Prince Harry
II (7-12): Your skin almost always burns and rarely tans.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• White skin, blonde to light brown hair, green, gray, or blue eyes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Blake Lively• Jake Gyllenhaal
III (13-18): Your skin sometimes burns and sometimes tans.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fair to beige skin, with golden undertones, brown hair, hazel or light brown eyes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Katie Holmes• Sandra Oh• Zac Efron
IV (19-24): Your skin tends to tan easily and is less likely to burn.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Olive or light brown skin, dark brown hair and eyes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Eva Mendes,• Mariah Carey• Dev Patel
V (25-30): Your skin tans easily and rarely burns.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dark brown or black hair, skin, and eyes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Beyonce• Zoe Saldana• Will Smith
VI (31+): Your skin never burns	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Black skin and hair, brownish black eyes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Naomi Campbell• Taye Diggs• Don Cheadle

Next page: “but still, what does this matter?” →

Right, but still: why does this matter?

A person's skin hue tells us not only their specific risk for sun damage and skin cancer, but also how their skin might react to certain products. See below:

Type	Implications for sun exposure	Implications for skin care
I & II	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extremely high risk of developing skin cancer and early aging from sun exposure. Hydration and SPF 30+ is critical. Sun protection should include clothing, sunglasses, and hats. Have an annual skin exam by a medical professional. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can be prone to erythema (redness and swelling). Very sensitive to the sun. Can be sensitive to mechanical exfoliants, especially post-peel or if using topical tretinoin. Use caution with harsh ingredients such as benzoyl peroxide or prescription topicals.
III & IV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Still at risk for skin damage from the sun, but less so vs. lighter types. Most important to wear SPF 30 sunscreen daily; seek shade or wear a hat between 10am-4pm (when the sun is strongest). Have an annual skin exam by a medical professional. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Risk of post-inflammatory hyperpigmentation (dark spots on the skin) after trauma to the skin from blemishes, cuts, scrapes, chemical peels, and harsh ingredients. Skin care professional MUST prep skin before any type of chemical peel / exfoliation; may include a series of "preparatory" treatments and a specific home care routine. Proceed with caution on mechanical exfoliation.
V & VI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Risk of developing skin cancer is much lower. But, beware of the skin cancer named acral lentiginous melanoma; these dark spots may appear on parts of the body that aren't exposed to sun, so they can spread undetected for a long time. Continue to wear SPF 30 daily, avoid direct sun exposure during peak hours (10am-4pm). Have an annual skin exam by a medical professional 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Avoid or exercise extreme caution if using mechanical exfoliation. Avoid resorcinol (TCA peels). More appropriate ingredients for peels include lactic, mandelic, kojic acids and arbutin. Use Vitamin C to repair cell damage. Use Vitamin A to accelerate cell turnover. Use toner/pad solutions containing glycolic acid and retinol to treat hyperpigmentation. Skin Scripts' pads also contain melanin inhibitors.

Our takeaways? The sun-kissed look is short-lived and rarely worth it. And, skin care products are not one-size-fits-all. Make sure your therapists are informed. Take care to protect your skin; you'll look healthier in the short-and-long term!