

Don't Get Burned

Contributed by Tyler Cohen

Tips and products to keep you un-singed

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It's not an uncommon scene: after a spring tour, you return to the trailhead only to find your entire neck—or nose, or ears, or inner thighs (don't ask)—a shiny red sunburn blister. For backcountry skiers and riders, especially those who ski at altitude, it's critical to always wear protection from the sun.

Clothing is a first line of defense. On steamy, bluebird days, a loose, long-sleeved, light-colored shirt, a hat with a visor and a wrap around your neck can keep you scorch-free. Buff has a line of 95-percent UV-blocking products (buffwear.com) that can be made into anything from hats to faux-turbans. It's also possible to sunburn your eyes (and that is very bad), so select dark, UV-blocking sunglasses of the wrap-around variety, or with side flaps like Julbo's Montebianco (julbousa.com).

Buy sunscreen in small bottles, and keep them handy in a chest pocket or backpack hipbelt zip. The FDA recommends reapplying sunblock (even waterproof kinds) every two hours. To stay on schedule, reapply at least every time you have a snack on bright days. And according to the FDA, only broad-spectrum sunscreens (which block both UVA and UVB rays) with an SPF value of 15 or higher actually reduce the risk of skin cancer. SPF 30 blocks 97% of rays, and data suggests that SPF values higher than 50 don't add much protection.

Snow reflects the sun, and can burn you in all kinds of unlikely— and uncomfortable—places. Don't forget to slather sunscreen on skin exposed through thigh vents, up your shorts (yep), and inside your nostrils. A stick of Dermatone (dermatone.com) works well for your nose and lips. Even the inside of your mouth can become sunburned, though there's no way to avoid it except keeping yer yap shut. Be especially cautious of the sun at high altitude. According to a 1999 study published by the American Academy of Dermatology, UVB levels at 8,500 feet in Vail, CO were approximately 60 percent higher than at sea level in New York. Just think: if Snookie and "The Unit" can get that grossly tanned on the Jersey Shore, imagine how they'd look after a few days in Silverton....

If you do get burned, drink lots of water (sunburn and dehydration go hand in hand), and apply an aloe-based cream, like Beyond Coastal's AfterSun (beyondcoastal.com). —Tyler Cohen