



FITZPATRICK SKIN TYPE.



Developed in 1975 by the dermatologist Thomas B. Fitzpatrick, the Fitzpatrick Scale is a skin classification system for human skin color. While initially developed on the basis of segmenting by skin and eye color, the current Fitzpatrick scale classifies skin types into six categories according to how they react to the sun (UV exposure). The Fitzpatrick Scale classifies your skin's reaction to harmful ultraviolet light using a numerical system.

The Fitzpatrick scale is a very useful methodology to predict a patient's level of risk for sun damage and skin cancer. Understanding your Fitzpatrick skin type is a great first step to protecting your skin! In addition to assessing your risk for skin cancer, knowing your Fitzpatrick Skin Type can help you understand how your Client will respond to certain skincare procedures. Keep reading to learn more.

WHY YOUR FITZPATRICK SKIN TYPE MATTERS

The Fitzpatrick Skin Type is a measure of melanin in your skin. However, it's so much more than an assessment of skin color. Your Fitzpatrick Skin Type not only gives you information about how you'll respond to sun exposure, it helps you and your doctors understand how you'll respond to certain skin treatments.

Fitzpatrick Skin Types range from 1 to 6. In general, those with type 1 skin are most susceptible to sun damage, wrinkles, and sun spots. Type 1 skin is also at high risk for skin cancer. On the other end of the scale, those with type 6 skin have more melanin and are thus better protected from the sun.

In addition, your Fitzpatrick Skin Type gives your dermatologist information about how you might react to certain treatments. For example, if your skin type is in the 4-6 range, you're at risk for pigmentation in response to chemical peels or dermabrasion. Fitzpatrick Skin Type is also used to assess the correct dose for UV light therapy.

The Fitzpatrick scale classifies skin into six types (I-VI) based on skin colour, **sun sensitivity**, and **tanning ability**. Here's a breakdown of the six Fitzpatrick Skin Types:

Skin Type	Skin Color	Sunburn Risk	Tanning Ability
Type I	Pale white	Always burns	Never tans
Type II	Fair	Usually burns	Tans minimally
Type III	Light brown	Sometimes mild burn	Tans gradually
Type IV	Olive	Burns minimally	Tans moderately
Type V	Dark brown	Rarely burns	Tans easily
Type VI	Deeply pigmented	Very rarely burns	Tans deeply

-CHARACTERISTICS OF DIFFERENT FITZPATRICK SKIN TYPES

Classification of skin types is partially subjective and based on interviews of patients with different skin tones concerning their past sun reactions. After realizing distinct patterns Fitzpatrick isolated six skin types as follows often called the “Fitzpatrick Scale”:

Fitzpatrick Skin Type 1

- Always burns, never tans
- Skin color of pale or ivory
- Eye color of blue
- Hair color of blond or red
- Moderate to severe freckles along skin

Fitzpatrick Skin Type 2

- Usually burns, minimal tanning
- Skin color of fair
- Eye color of blue, green, or hazel
- Hair color of blonde or red
- Light to moderate freckles along skin

Fitzpatrick Skin Type 3

- Mild burns at times, uniform tanning
- Skin color of creamy white or fair
- Eye color of hazel or light brown
- Hair color of dark blonde to light brown
- Minimal freckling after exposure

Fitzpatrick Skin Type 4

- Burns minimally, always tans well
- Skin color of light brown or olive

- Eye color of brown
- Hair color of dark brown
- Skin doesn't really freckle

Fitzpatrick Skin Type 5

- Very rarely burns, tans very easily/rapidly
- Skin color of dark brown to black
- Eye color of dark brown to black
- Hair color of dark brown to black

Fitzpatrick Skin Type 6

- Never tans, never burns
- Skin color of black
- Eye color of brownish black
- Hair color of black

SUN SENSITIVITY AND YOU: HOW SKIN TYPE IMPACTS SUN SAFETY

Generally, people with higher Fitzpatrick Skin Types (more **melanin**) have lower **sun sensitivity**. Melanin is the pigment that gives color to your skin, hair, and eyes. It also helps protect your skin from UV radiation. Those with darker skin tones (Types IV-VI) have more natural protection against sunburn and skin cancer due to their higher melanin levels.

Conversely, those with lower Fitzpatrick Skin Types (less melanin) burn more easily and require stricter sun protection. People with fair skin (Types I-II) are more susceptible to sunburn, skin aging, and skin cancer because they have less natural protection from UV radiation.

It's important to note that regardless of skin type, overexposure to UV rays can cause sunburn. Even if you have a higher Fitzpatrick Skin Type, it's crucial to practice sun safety to protect your skin from damage.

Beyond Sunburn: Skin Cancer Risk and Sun Protection

Excessive sun exposure increases the risk skin cancer for all skin types. While those with lower Fitzpatrick Skin Types are at a higher risk, anyone can develop skin cancer, including individuals with darker skin tones.

Sun protection is crucial for everyone, regardless of skin type. Here are key strategies to protect your skin:

- **Seek Shade:** Limit sun exposure, especially during peak hours (10 am – 4 pm).
- **Sun-Protective Clothing:** Wear protective clothing, hats, and sunglasses.
- **Sunscreen:** Apply broad-spectrum sunscreen with SPF 30 or higher liberally and reapply every two hours, or more often if swimming or sweating.

Choosing the Right Sunscreen for Your Skin Type

While everyone needs sun protection, the ideal SPF may vary depending on your skin type.

- **Fair Skin (Types I & II):** Opt for SPF 30 or higher for optimal protection.
- **Light Brown skin (Type III):** SPF 30 is generally sufficient, but consider SPF 50 for extended sun exposure.
- **Darker Skin Tones (Types IV-VI):** While less prone to sunburn, SPF 30 protection is still recommended.

If you have sensitive skin

look for fragrance-free, oil-free sunscreens formulated for your skin type. Those with acne-prone skin may benefit from non-comedogenic sunscreens that won't clog pores.

.Fitzpatrick Skin Types 1 and 2

Those with type 1 or 2 skin fall on the fair skinned end of the skin color spectrum. This means the skin has very little melanin, a pigment which protects you from sun damage. Skin types 1 and 2 are at high risk of the following:

- Sunburn and sun damage
- Early skin aging due to sun exposure
- All types of skin cancer, including melanoma

To prevent sunburn, the early onset of wrinkles or sunspots, and to protect yourself from skin cancer, practice the following risk-reducing measures:

- Limit sun exposure
- Wear protective clothing when outdoors
- Always wear sunscreen with an SPF of 30 or higher
- Wear protective sunglasses
- Do a full body skin check once monthly at home
- See your dermatologist annually for a full body skin check

Fitzpatrick Skin Types 3 to 6

If your skin type falls in the 3-6 range, you still have some risk of sun damage or skin cancer. This is especially true if you've used indoor tanning beds in the past. Note that those with darker skin are often diagnosed with melanoma at a later stage, so continue to be vigilant regarding monthly skin checks.

Although skin types 3-6 are at less risk for skin cancer, following the above tips will ensure maximum protection. In addition, learn to identify the early stages of skin cancer. The ABCDE's of skin cancer are a good guide to use:

A: Is your mole **asymmetrical**?

B: Is the **border** irregular, raised, or poorly defined?

C: Does the **color** vary?

D: Is the **diameter** larger than a pencil eraser?

E: Is it **evolving**; changing in size, shape or color?

Keep in mind not all of the above have to be true for a mole to be cancerous. If a mole is of concern to you, see your dermatologist.

The most common form of melanoma for those with darker skin is *aerial lentiginous melanoma*. This type of skin cancer typically appears on parts of the body that aren't normally exposed to the sun. Learn to do a thorough exam by practicing the following:

- Stand in front of a full-length mirror, raise your arms, and turn left and right
- Use a handheld mirror to view the back of your neck, back, buttocks and legs

- Check your underarms, palms and the soles of your feet

In addition to at-home skin checks, visit your doctor annually for a more thorough, professional exam.

WHEN TO GET SCREENED FOR SKIN CANCER

Regardless of your Fitzpatrick Skin Type, you should see your dermatologist annually to be screened for skin cancer. Your doctor might recommend you get screened more often if any of the following are true:

- Your Fitzpatrick Skin Type is 1 or 2
- You have a family history of skin cancer
- You live an active, outdoor lifestyle
- You have a compromised immune system

In addition to annual doctor visits, follow the above guidelines for monthly personal skin checks.