



# Striking Out: Top 5 Myths About Skin For Women Of Color

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Ladies, Spring is here and as the weather gets warmer, we'll be out more—and exposing more of our beautiful **skin**. Before you jump out and enjoy sports and sporting events in the sun, make sure you're doing the right things to protect your skin. For women with fair skin, there is information overload about how to protect lighter-toned skin. For women of darker complexions, there are still many myths that can lead to harmful behavior.

The truth is that most mainstream commercials about beauty products do NOT target women of color. It's considered a "niche" or specialized market. In fact, until recent decades, women of color were virtually cut out of advertising—as they were not considered the standard of beauty. As such, women with darker complexions had to come up with their own regimens and learn about skincare from their mothers or from routines that had been passed down from generations. Some of that was good. Some not-so-good. In fact, many of the myths about darker complexions are still pervasive. So, we reached out to [Dr. Rebecca Baxt](#) to get to the truth and dispel some of these harmful myths.



## Dr. Rebecca Baxt, board certified dermatologist

### Myth 1: Dark skin doesn't need sunscreen.

**The Truth:** Although lighter-colored skin has less melanin to protect against harmful UV light that results in pre-cancers, skin cancers and premature aging, people with darker skin tones don't get a free pass when it comes to applying sunscreen. Darker skin is less likely to tan or burn because it has more melanin, which gives it protection from UV damage, "but it is not enough to protect from our powerful UV rays. **Wear sunscreen to prevent burns, damage and the formation of free radicals at a cellular level,**" explains **Dr. Rebecca Baxt a board certified Manhattan/New Jersey dermatologist.** This does mean, however, that darker skin has more natural defenses to protect itself from "the premature aging effects of UV light, such as freckles, sun spots, broken blood vessels, fine lines, pre-cancers and cancers in comparison to individuals with

lighter skin." Use SPF sunscreen of at least 30, and apply it 10 to 15 minutes before going outside. Reapply every two hours after the skin becomes wet or sweaty.

### Myth 2: Dark skin doesn't need moisturizer.

**The Truth:** Every skin type requires moisturizer. This misnomer that dark skin doesn't need moisture developed from the fact that "dark skin typically produces more oil, allowing for a more intact barrier function," explains Dr. Baxt. Yet dark skin still "needs water or moisture in the skin." We apply moisturizers to maintain healthy functioning of the skin and balance, as well as feeding our skin the essential nutrients it expels throughout the day. The level of hydration and

type of moisturizer you need should be determined by your skin's oil production, so oily skin suits lightweight, oil-free moisturizer, while dry skin needs an ultra-rich, creamy moisturizer.

**Myth 3: Dirt doesn't hurt.**

**The Truth:** There's an urban legend in our culture that says black women shouldn't wash their hair frequently. You've probably heard the saying, "Dirt makes your hair grow." It's true that oil is healthy for hair but product build-up and dirt are far from beneficial to your scalp and tresses. Dr. Baxt says that, "Hair should be washed at least once every 7-10 days. This isn't a rule that's set in stone. You know your hair better than anyone else so if you have to wash your hair more often during this time frame, then go for it. It's true shampoo can rid hair of beneficial oils so try a sulfate-free, well ph-balanced formula to avoid dry, brittle results."

**Myth 4: Dark skin doesn't experience redness.**

**The Truth:** "Although dark skin may not appear to become red and irritated, all skin types have the potential to exhibit these signs and symptoms," explains Dr. Baxt. Often a person with dark skin can't see the redness, but he or she can still feel the irritation. Even though redness is not visible in everyday cases, dark skin will experience redness during and after laser procedures, microdermabrasion and chemical peels.

**Myth 5: All dark skin is the same.**

**The Truth:** Naturally, all dark skin is not the same as the levels of melanin differ, making some skin appear as lighter shades of brown, darker brown and black skin. "There is a higher risk of complications to consider when working with darker skin [in a medical spa or doctor's office] when considering microdermabrasion, chemical peels or laser treatments," explains Dr. Baxt. In comparison to light skin, darker skin is more prone to tissue injury, inflammation, scarring and hyperpigmentation and develops thicker, raised scars called keloids.

So, there you have it Jersey Girls. Before you head out to enjoy sports this spring and summer make sure you're protected. We want you to stay beautiful and love the skin you're in.

Your Jersey Girlfriend,

~Angela Davis