



The Best Sunscreen Under the Sun



We just told you that you need to be wearing sunscreen. So are you?

Despite continually heightened awareness about the sun's harmful effects, the **American Academy of Dermatology** (AAD) finds that most people apply only 25 to 50 percent of the sunscreen needed. And though doctors struggle with how little we use, it's *what* we use that keeps them up at night. But not for long.

After decades with little to no legislative changes and 12 years of constant pressure from the Environmental Working Group (EWG), the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) proposed a revised Sunscreen Innovation Act in February. According to FDA commissioner Dr. Scott Gottlieb, this act “... improve[s] quality, safety, and efficacy of the sunscreens Americans use every day.”

NEW YEAR, NEW RULES

Sunscreen is not new to criticism. Alongside the EWG, clean beauty brands such as Beautycounter have long demanded safer products and updated federal regulations because “... of the 17 sunscreen ingredients on the market, almost all of them were approved back in the '70s,” according to Craig Downs, executive director of the **Haereticus Environmental Laboratory**.

Just last year, Downs was instrumental in Hawaii banning two sunscreen ingredients — oxybenzone and retinyl palmitate — that pollute the environment and destroy coral reefs and marine life.

Yet it's just not ingredients under contention — form and SPF levels are often considered toxic and deceiving. Sprays have inhalation risks and don't provide a thick/even coat of sunscreen, while highSPF products, in addition to higher concentrations of chemicals, lull sunbathers into a false sense of security. Studies show people use (and reapply) high SPF sunscreen less often than they should.

The latest Sunscreen Innovation Act is positioned to nurture us, offering better products and more transparent information. “Broad-spectrum sunscreens with SPF values of at least 15 are critical ... some of the essential requirements for these preventive tools haven't been updated in decades. ... We know much more about the effects of the sun and about sunscreen's absorption through the skin,” says Gottlieb.

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

You need a science degree to read sunscreen packaging these days. Laden with chemicals — oxybenzone, octocrylene, octinoxate, avobenzone, and retinyl palmitate among them — sunscreens are filled with dangers. While “broad-spectrum” labels emerged in 2011, some sunscreens still protect more against UVB (the burning rays that contribute most to skin cancers) than UVA (of which there are

500 times more than UVB rays, and they penetrate deeper, leading more to aging skin than cancers). And, hold on to your sun hats, the FDA *now* realizes that hefty chemicals in sunscreen are leading less toward sun protection and more toward free radicals, endocrine disruptions, and, if you ask some scientists, an *increased* incidence of skin cancers.

So how can you find the absolute best — and safest — sun protection? As our health and wellness takes precedence as we age, being overly conscientious while relying on expert guidance (like the **EWG's annual sunscreen guide**) is the best way to navigate. Sure, there may be more than 3,500 sunscreens containing toxic ingredients, but there are plenty of phenomenal clean-beauty brands and emerging technologies now throwing shade our way.

LET THE SUN SHINE

The safest sunscreen is a physical blocker. There are two ingredients that literally sit *on* the skin to protect you, without being absorbed into the skin: zinc oxide (yes, what lifeguards strutted around wearing in the '70s) and titanium dioxide. Both are broad spectrum and harmful-additive free, yet neither will break down in the sun. The ingredients may not be groundbreaking, but the formulas (especially the formerly white zinc oxide) have been perfected.



Some of our faves are (left to right) [Goddess Garden Sport](#), [EltaMD Skincare UV Clear](#), [Drunk Elephant Umbra Sheer Physical Daily Defense](#), and [ThinkSport Safe Sunscreen](#).

SUNNY NEW IDEAS

While the FDA mulls over new laws, a few brands are shining bright with innovations.



Though not evaluated by the FDA, **HelioCare** is recommended by many dermatologists. It is a natural extract supplement with antioxidant properties that can act as both sunscreen and protector against the aging effects of free radicals. According to Beverly Hills-based dermatologist Dr. Tsippora Shainhouse, "HelioCare acts as an oral sunscreen and can suppress sunburn and make it take longer to tan, letting you safely stay out in the sun longer. It helps prevent both UVA- and UVB-induced skin cell toxicity and direct DNA damage, and helps prevent the UV-induced free radical

formation and subsequent DNA damage and collagen destruction.” The company is adamant that the product is not a replacement for traditional sun protection — so don’t use it as such.



From a brand whose No. 1 piece of beauty advice is “wear SPF” comes two new products we did not know we needed but now realize can boost our protection.

Having learned that 5 to 10 percent of skin cancers are found around the eyes, Supergoop masterminds developed an SPF 30 eyeshadow. Thanks to a “hybrid of mineral and clean chemical actives,” it won’t sting or affect your eyes’ sensitive skin. “People purposefully avoid SPF around their eyes,” says Supergoop founder Holly Thaggard. “It’s one of the first places that shows signs of

aging and one of the first places that dermatologists find skin cancer.” *PSA: Zinc oxide and titanium dioxide sunscreens also prevail in the delicate eye area. Mineral SPF/physical blockers are designed for sensitive skin and won’t sting when you get sweaty. We’d rather get our lines from laughter than the sun.*

Recognizing the need for an “SPF wardrobe” in order to layer sunscreen, Supergoop also developed **Superscreen Daily Moisturizer**. In addition to SPF, it has a rare mineral (cerium) to reflect skindamaging blue light emitted from digital screens. Blue light, according to a *Journal of Investigative Dermatology* study, leads to more redness, swelling, and pigment production than UVA rays. According to Thaggard, “While UVB rays penetrate the outermost layers of skin, blue light penetrates into deeper layers of the skin, causing things like **hyperpigmentation**, age spots, and melasma.”

EVERY. SINGLE. DAY.

Which brings us to makeup. We’d love to pride ourselves on having SPF in a few (or even one) of our cosmetics, but the truth is it’s not sufficient. According to Dr. Lily Talakoub, dermatologist at McLean Dermatology and Skincare Center, “Makeup with an SPF often protects against UVB radiation only. Most do not have any coverage against the UVA rays that will go through your car window, home windows, all the clouds, the rainstorms, and the snow. Even if you find a broad-spectrum product you like, there is basically no way you’re wearing enough of it to get the sun protection you think you’re getting.” Dr. Talakoub estimates you’d need to layer on makeup 15 times thicker to achieve the product’s promised SPF.

Plus, getting sunscreen into makeup is tough. “Chemical sunscreens incorporate more elegantly into makeup formulations,” explains Dr. Melanie D. Palm, a San Diego-based dermatologist, cosmetic surgeon, and founding director of **Art of Skin MD**. “Physical agents such as zinc oxide and titanium dioxide are harder to incorporate into cosmetics without changing the formulation, spread, and wear of the product; however, they’re typically the preferred sunscreen agent of dermatologists.”

We've captured the best and the brightest year-round products below using only safe ingredients. And cast any vitamin D fears aside. According to the Skin Cancer Foundation, studies have never found everyday sunscreen use leads to vitamin D insufficiency.



Beekman 1802 Triple Milk Primer is No. 1 on the EWG list.



BareMinerals' primary raison d'être is getting its natural sunscreen (titanium dioxide or zinc oxide) makeup on as many faces as possible.



Aromatica is the only Korean company to earn EWG's Skindeep Champion Status awarded to beauty brands for toxin-free products.



And finally, **Beautycounter** makeup lives up to strict standards, including The Never List of approximately 1,500 harmful or questionable ingredients. Now you're covered, **boardroom** to **bikini**.

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