

Sunscreen Myth vs Fact



Value of Sunscreen

Myth: Lower SPF sunscreens work at least as well as those with higher SPF.

Fact: High SPF formulas offer superior protection for people most vulnerable to skin cancer, including cancer survivors and those with fair skin. Scientists and medical experts know that high SPF sunscreen is a game changer, and it saves lives. The Journal of the American Academy of Dermatology in 2017 announced their studies found SPF 100+ sunscreen is more protective against sunburn than SPF 50+ in actual use.

People typically only apply 25-30% of the amount of sunscreen used in SPF lab testing, thereby receiving 25-50% of the labeled SPF value. Because most people under apply, high SPF provides a margin of safety in actual use. According to a recent study published by the American Academy of Dermatology, SPF 100+ sunscreen was significantly more effective in protecting against sunburn than SPF 50+ sunscreen in actual use conditions. And, any sunscreen with an SPF value of 70+ requires oxybenzone as an ingredient to stabilize the formula and provide broad spectrum protection.

Myth: All sunscreen is created equal.

Fact: Sunscreen is personal. Dermatologists agree the best sunscreen is the one you prefer and will use. There are many factors people consider when choosing a sunscreen including formula aesthetics, SPF value, product form, and special needs like for sensitive skin or water activity. A variety of choice is important so all consumers can follow sun protection guidelines.

Myth: Sunscreen is not always necessary.

Fact: Many people believe that you only need to apply sunscreen on cloudy days or when your entire body is exposed to sunlight. This is false. Ultraviolet light is still harmful when the sun is not visible. Wearing sunscreen all the time will help protect your skin, even when you don't think you need to put it on.

Sunscreen Safety

Myth: Oxybenzone is an unnecessary ingredient in most sunscreens.

Fact: Oxybenzone is found in 9 out of the 10 sunscreens that consumers prefer and most often use. It's also found in 70% of the overall sunscreen products on the market. This is partially because the chemical enhances the spreadability and application of sunscreen resulting in a higher likelihood of reapplication.

Oxybenzone is one of two FDA-approved filters that provide protection from both UVA and UVB rays (broad spectrum). The UV filter is unmatched in its ability to keep formula stable in sunlight and to be used in combination with other filters for the greatest broad-spectrum protection. It's also required for high SPF values of SPF 70+. Using sunscreen without oxybenzone puts a person at risk of not protecting their skin entirely. It's the only commonly used FDA-Approved UV filter on the market other than zinc oxide that protects from both UVA and UVB rays.

Myth: Oxybenzone isn't safe for human use.

Fact: Oxybenzone was approved for use in thousands of products by the FDA in the early 1980s. Oxybenzone has been safely used in sunscreens, lip balms, anti-aging creams, shampoos, and nail polish.

It's also used in many other consumer products like fabric, plastic bottles, paints, and anything that might be exposed to the sun.

Myth: Sunscreen is toxic and puts dangerous chemicals on your skin.

Fact: Some lab studies suggest that chemicals in sunscreens such as oxybenzone may cause skin allergies or mimic hormones, but no studies have convincingly established health problems in people. Meanwhile, it's well proven that damage from UV rays can cause skin cancer.

Reef Safe

Myth: Sunscreen containing oxybenzone is scientifically linked to causing coral decline.

Fact: According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the cause of coral decline is due to global climate change, leading to high ocean temperatures, elevated water levels, and ocean acidification from increased global CO₂. Local stressors include things like unsustainable fishing practices and pollution from agricultural and municipal run-off. There is no sound data that shows oxybenzone is a significant cause of coral decline. Bans on certain sunscreen ingredients are based on two poorly designed studies that do not reflect the true natural complexity and ecosystem of a coral reef.

Myth: "Reef-Safe" is a legitimate regulated category for consumer products.

Fact: "Reef-Safe" is not a legitimate category, nor is it a regulated category by the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) or any regulatory body anywhere in the world. The FTC requires that all claims in advertising be truthful and not misleading with competent and reliable scientific evidence to support all claims.

Myth: Sunscreen bans have proven a benefit to coral health.

Fact: Sunscreen bans have no proven benefit to coral health- and will pose risk to public health. Sunscreen is proven to prevent skin cancer especially in places like Florida which has one of the highest rates of skin cancer in the country. Key West and Monroe County specifically have an especially high UV index and melanoma claims almost twice as many lives on average as elsewhere in Florida. According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the cause of coral bleaching is due to global climate change, ocean acidification, and unsustainable fishing practices. Florida is being forced into a false choice between protecting human health and protecting coral reefs. Both can be done.

Sunscreen Access

Myth: Sunscreen can be medically prescribed to a person.

Fact: Prescription sunscreen does not exist. Sunscreen is classified as an over-the-counter (OTC) product and cannot be labeled as "Rx only." There is no process to store or sell sunscreens as prescription products for retailers and pharmacies. Also, requiring a prescription for sunscreen would put an unnecessary barrier to access UV protection. By reducing access to sunscreen, the increased risk of skin cancer is guaranteed. Especially for Floridians, where Florida is expected to rank second in the nation for rate of new melanoma cases.



Take action to protect your access to sunscreen and learn more about the science behind sunscreens at www.SunSafeFlorida.com