

# Sunscreen Myth vs Fact

## Value of Sunscreen

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

**Fact:** Science suggests superior protection of high-SPF sunscreens (70+) compared to lower SPF product in real-world use scenarios,<sup>1</sup> including cancer survivors and those with fair skin. 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. And, 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 or when your 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

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**Myth:** Oxybenzone is an unnecessary ingredient in most sunscreens.

**Fact:** Oxybenzone is found in 9 out of the 10 sunscreens that consumers prefer and 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 reliable 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+.

**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.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.jaad.org/article/S0190-9622\(17\)32908-0/pdf](https://www.jaad.org/article/S0190-9622(17)32908-0/pdf)

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

**Fact:** A recent FDA study found small amounts of UV filters are absorbed by the skin when applied at maximal usage conditions,<sup>2</sup> which is the equivalent of 2+ bottles of sunscreen in just four days – far more than typical use. This study did not look at real-world use conditions. No evidence shows that absorption of small amounts of sunscreen ingredients, as those detected in the Maximal Usage Trial study, has harmful effects on human health.

## Reef Safe

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

**Fact:** According to the scientific community, the cause of coral decline is due to global climate change. Increased CO2 levels leads to high ocean temperatures, more frequent and powerful hurricanes, and ocean acidification, which damages coral. Local stressors include things like sedimentation, disease and invasive species, unsustainable fishing practices and pollution from agricultural and municipal run-off. There is currently 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 regulated category for consumer products that are safe for coral reefs.

**Fact:** “Reef-Safe” is not a scientific term, nor is it a regulated category by the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) or any regulatory body anywhere in the world.

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

**Fact:** Sunscreen bans have no proven benefit to coral health- and will pose a 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. 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

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**Myth:** Sunscreen can be medically prescribed to a person.

**Fact:** In the United States, sunscreens are classified and regulated as over-the-counter medicines by the FDA. There is currently no process to store or sell sunscreens as prescription products for retailers and pharmacies. Also, requiring a prescription for sunscreen would put a barrier to access UV protection.

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<sup>2</sup> [https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/fullarticle/2733085?guestAccessKey=e1ad4492-fe70-4f53-970d-d63bfa1cdccd&utm\\_source=For\\_The\\_Media&utm\\_medium=referral&utm\\_campaign=ftm\\_links&utm\\_content=tf&utm\\_term=05062019](https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/fullarticle/2733085?guestAccessKey=e1ad4492-fe70-4f53-970d-d63bfa1cdccd&utm_source=For_The_Media&utm_medium=referral&utm_campaign=ftm_links&utm_content=tf&utm_term=05062019)



Take action to protect your access to sunscreen and learn more about the science behind sunscreens at [www.SunSafeFlorida.com](http://www.SunSafeFlorida.com)