

## Tackling the Sunscreen Question

It's summer, the sun is sizzling and so is your exposed skin, right? So what do you do? Reach for the sunscreen and slather it on before heading out to enjoy the welcome rays of sunshine, of course. But wait, sunscreen has come under more scrutiny than before (it's always been a bit of a debate) but now recent findings and disclosures about potentially hazardous ingredients may make you want to reconsider what you are rubbing into your skin.

I decided to try and get a handle on this rather complex issue. I found a great resource which you need to know about. The Environmental Working Group (EWG) just completed their 4<sup>th</sup> annual Sunscreen Guide where they rated 500 sunscreen products after in depth analyzing and research. Their findings? They only recommend 39--a whopping 8 percent--of the products they tested.

Why? The recent surge in exaggerated SPF claims (SPF 100, really?) and the particular concern of recently developed government data linking Vitamin A, which is in a boat load of sunscreens, to increased growth of skin tumors and lesions. Apparently it reacts with sunlight and produces free radicals.

The EWG recommends limiting time in the sun and using hats, clothing and shade as the most reliable sun protection, but next to that, they did give some products their coveted "green" rating for safety and efficacy. Those products all contain the minerals zinc or titanium. If you are looking for non-mineral sunscreens, there aren't any that scored green but a few that scored "yellow." The bad news is that most popular sunscreens scored the dreaded "red" which EWG advises you steer clear of.

A quick look at the labels will help you in your search. If it contains oxybenzone, put it back on the shelf. This is a hormone-disrupting compound found in about 60 percent of the 500 products tested. Another ingredient to avoid until further testing is the Vitamin A compound usually listed as retinyl palmitate.

Here is a short list of a few of the sunscreens that earned the safe rating. You should be able to find these at a health food store like Pure N'Simple in Delaware or at Whole Foods (Dublin) or Raisin Rack (Westerville): Badger, Jason Sunbrellas, Desert Essence Age Reversal, L'uvalla Certified Organic, Loving Naturals, Soleo Organics and Caribbean Solutions.

The Hall of Shame, as identified by EWG, includes products like Panama Jack Naturals Baby Sunblock SPF 50 (contains potential hormone disruptor), Hawaiian Tropic Baby Crème Lotion SPF 50 (claims it has advanced UVA protection, which it doesn't) and Banana Boat Baby Max Protect SPF 100 (don't fall for sky high SPF numbers—these still leave your baby exposed to UVA radiation).

Studies have found that high SPF products, which do protect against UVB ray sunburns, often provide very little protection against UVA radiation—the type of sunlight that does not burn but is believed responsible for considerable skin damage and cancer.

So consider playing it "better-safe-than-sorry" this summer. Get online, whether at home or at the library or at a friend's house, and go to [www.ewg.org/2010sunscreen](http://www.ewg.org/2010sunscreen). You can check out the top-rated sunscreens and even look your brand up to see how well it fared.

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