

# How to Pick the Best Sunscreen for You Like a Pro

By [Darina](#) / April 23, 2020

Summer is almost around the corner and the sunny days are more and more frequent. Whether you can go to the beach (which I am totally jealous of), go out in the sun, take the dog for a walk or simply sunbathe on your balcony or in the yard, you will definitely need sunscreen.

Did you know the skin is the largest external organ in our body? It is only natural to do your best to maintain its stability; the so-called homeostasis.

Any imbalances can cause detrimental effects such as wrinkles, rashes, skin cancer, blisters, and immune disorder to name just a few.

The best thing you can do to your skin is to protect it from the harmful sun rays. According to [cancer.org](https://www.cancer.org) "It's not possible (or healthy) to avoid sunlight completely, but there are ways to help ensure you're not getting too much sun".

One such recommended way is to use sunscreen on the parts of the body that are not covered with clothes. But how do you pick the right one?

In this post, I will go over what to look for on a label, how to avoid getting tricked, and the difference between the 3 types of UV radiation (UVA, UVB, and UVC rays). Here I have also done the hard work for you (as always 😊) and managed to provide you with the best sunblocks list on the market.

## **UV rays breakdown**

- **UVA rays:** Are the most dangerous since they can penetrate the epidermis and dermis skin layers and reach the hypodermis. Thus, damaging cells and causing premature aging. Keep in mind that the UVA rays are present the whole day, even in the mornings and late afternoons. These rays can also penetrate window glass.
- **UVB rays:** Commonly known as the “burn rays” because they are associated with sunburn due to their ability to damage the DNA in skin cells directly. It is believed the UVB rays have caused the most skin cancer.
- **UVC rays:** Are the ones blocked by the ozone layer before reaching the Earth’s surface, so those coming from the sun should not be a concern. However, there are other sources of UVC rays that are man-made such as mercury lamps, welding torches and more.

Did you know that 95% of the UV rays from the sun that reach the Earth’s surface are UVA rays and the remaining 5% are UVB rays?

Therefore, the two types of UV that you need to protect yourself from are both UVA and UVB.

Being exposed to UVR is not necessarily a bad thing. Studies have shown that UVR has been useful in treating Vitamin D deficiency, psoriasis, seasonal affective disorder (SAD) and more.

So, getting some sunlight is important for our well being but how do we get UVR without getting the bad effects, you ask?

## **By using sunscreen!**

There are many different sizes and shapes of sunscreens available on the market such as lotion, spray, cream, lip balm, ointment, gel, butter, sticks, and even some makeup products have sunscreen protection.

***Note: The FDA doesn't authorize the marketing of nonprescription products such as wipes, powders, body washes, shampoos or towelettes.***

## **What to look for!**

### ***Read the label.***

The first thing to do is to read the label of the sunscreens! Look for broad spectrum protection (against UVA and UVB) and SPF of 30 or higher are recommended!

## **What is Broad spectrum?**

When a product is labeled as Broad spectrum it means that it provides protection from UVA and UVB by creating a chemical barrier which absorbs, reflects or blocks the radiation before it can do any damage to your skin.

## **What is SPF?**

I am sure you know about **SPF** but do you know what that is?

Sunscreens were designed to protect the skin from the UVR and the FDA came up with a monograph providing a numerical definition for labeling sunscreen protection products. **SPF** is basically the level of protection against the main cause of sunburn which are the UVB rays.

Check out a more detailed explanation [here](#).

It should be noted that as of 2011 the FDA passed new regulation where sunscreen has to pass a broad spectrum test which shows that they protect from both UVA and UVB rays.

So you should most definitely look for ***a broad-spectrum SPF(#)*** label on sunscreen.

***Pin these for later! (add pins)***

**Acceptable list of ingredients**

Most products have water or oils as a base which are called inactive ingredients, so do sunscreens. The ingredients you should pay a closer look at are the so-called active ingredients. They are the ones that protect your skin from the harmful UV rays.

### ***FDA Approved ingredients:***

- Aminobenzoic acid
- Avobenzene\*
- Cinoxate
- Dioxybenzone
- **Homosalate\***
- Meradimate
- **Octocrylene\***
- **Octinoxate\***
- **Octisalate\***
- **Oxybenzone\***
- Padimate O
- Ensulizole
- Sulisobenzone
- Titanium dioxide\*



- Trolamine salicylate
- Zinc oxide\*

Red color = high hazard toxicity 7-10

Orange color = moderate hazard 3-6

Green color = low hazard 1-2

It should be noted that even though FDA approved it doesn't mean that they are all safe. The list above contains some toxins that have high, moderate and low hazard toxicity ratings.

# Mineral vs Chemical sunscreens

The difference in the two categories is the list of ingredients found in them.

**Mineral Sunscreens** also called **Physical** usually have two natural minerals as active ingredients: [Zinc Oxide](#) and [Titanium Dioxide](#).

These minerals protect your skin by simply reflecting the UV rays.

Those kinds of sunscreen are believed to be better for your skin and tend to leave visible white marks.

**Chemical Sunscreens**, on the other hand, have chemical compounds as active ingredients. These chemicals absorb the UV rays. Those kinds of sunscreens are better to apply and do not leave white marks on the skin.

## **Waterproof/sweatproof:**

If you see this on a label check for additional info since this term can be ***misleading***. If a sunscreen claims to be waterproof or sweatproof then a statement for how long they protect while swimming should be visible. This should also be backed up by testing.

## **Expiration date:**

Do not forget to check the expiration date on the label to see if it is good to be used. Most sunscreens are effective for 2-3 years after the production date. So even if you do not see an expiration date there will be a production date on the product. Be sure to shake the sunscreen before using it.

# **USA VS. Europe and other countries sunscreens**

In the US sunscreens are categorized as drugs and they are being regulated as ones since they make drug claims like- prevention of sunburn, premature aging, and etc.

In Europe and some other countries, however, sunscreens are categorized as cosmetics and are subject to different marketing requirements. If you happen to buy sunscreen from other countries please read the label to understand the instructions and check the ingredients for any differences!

## **Interesting facts**

- Not all sunscreens are labeled broad spectrum.
- The FDA recommends using SPF 15 or higher.
- If you have lighter skin color then you should go for SPF 30 or higher.
- The FDA does not approve higher than SPF 50 claiming that there is no adequate data showing added benefit for consumers.

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As the founder of [Glossier](#) Emily Weiss once said.

*Sunscreen, in the world of beauty, is the ultimate in adulting!*

– *Emily Weiss*

## **Pro tips:**

- Apply sunscreen every 2h. If you sweat or get in and out of the water then you have to apply more frequently.
- Always follow the label instructions on when to apply.
- Sunscreen should be applied 15-30 min before sun exposure.
- Don't forget to apply on the face, neck, and upper part of the foot (in step).
- Sunscreen should also be applied if you are in high altitude or among snow since the snow reflectivity amplifies the sun's rays just like water does 😊.

## **The bottom line for sunscreens**

When you are looking at sunscreens you can go two ways, either just pick the cheapest one and don't even look at the label or thoroughly read the label and check for ***broad-spectrum, SPF index, active ingredients, mineral or chemical, expiration date*** and ***country of production***.

When it comes to my skin I prefer quality and after checking the label I choose the one that has the least amount of toxic active ingredients (they ALL have some % of toxic ingredients since those provide protection) and SPF 30 or higher.

**Check out the best sunscreen on the market!**

**Creams and lotions:** *(list affiliate links)*

**Stay safe out in the sun and apply sunscreen!**

If you like this post please share it with your friends on social media and don't forget to follow me too 😊

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What kind of sunscreen do you use? Did you know all the facts and what to look for on a label? Let me know in the comments.

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