

Your Skin Is a Reflection of You!

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Member, Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals

The Right Sunscreen

Cut through the hype and learn what works

Jason Barbara

According to the American Cancer Society, more than 2 million people are diagnosed with skin cancer in the United States each year. There are more than 2,000 over-the-counter sunscreen formulas on the market today. How can you tell which sunscreens are the safest, most effective, and represent the best value for your money? In most cases, the answer comes down to the difference between the two types of filtering ingredients.

Chemical or Physical?

The UV radiation in sunlight consists of UV-A, UV-B, and UV-C rays. UV-A and UV-B are both responsible for photoaging, skin cancer, sunburn,

- Work by absorbing UV radiation.
- Require application 30 minutes before sun exposure.
- Provide partial protection from UV spectrum.
- May irritate the skin and eyes.
- Not regulated for safety by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA); some may even be carcinogenic.
- Not photostable (exposure to sunlight degrades effectiveness).
- Avobenzone is the most commonly used chemical filter ingredient.

PHYSICAL UV FILTERS

- Work by reflecting UV radiation.
- Start protecting immediately upon use.
- Provide full broad-spectrum protection.

- Non-irritating to skin and eyes.
- Safe, as particles do not penetrate the skin.
- Highly photostable (exposure to sunlight does not change effectiveness).

Zinc oxide and titanium dioxide are the most commonly used physical filter

If you do not take care of your body, where else are you going to live?



Protection from harmful UV rays can do wonders for your skin.

tanning, and wrinkling. UV-C is not a factor in skin health, as it is absorbed by the Earth's atmosphere and does not reach us in significant amounts. Broad-spectrum sunscreen protects against both UV-A and UV-B. This protection can work in one of two ways: chemical or physical.

CHEMICAL UV FILTERS

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ingredients. Clothing and shade structures also count as physical filters.

How Stable Is It?

One of the most important factors in the effectiveness of a sunscreen formula is also one of the least known to the general public. Photostability is an ingredient's ability to remain effective after exposure to sunlight. Many people are aware that this is an issue for numerous skin care ingredients, but may be surprised to learn that some active ingredients in sunscreen--a product whose sole purpose involves being exposed to sunlight--are not photostable. In addition, the FDA's new rules do not require sunscreen ingredients to be tested for photostability. Yet, many consumers expect that their sunscreen will protect them for longer than one hour.

Physical filters such as zinc oxide and titanium dioxide are photostable. Studies have shown that these ingredients suffer no degradation after more than two hours of sun exposure. However, the chemical filter avobenzone is not at all photostable, and degrades almost completely in less than one hour. Even worse, avobenzone also degrades on contact with other UV filters such as zinc oxide or titanium dioxide, and with metal ions such as iron oxide, which is commonly found in makeup. This goes a long way toward explaining why many consumers experience sunburn even after applying sunscreen as directed.

Health Concerns

Effectiveness is not the only thing to consider in any product being applied to the face or body. Significant health concerns have also been raised about many sunscreen ingredients. Here are some issues to consider.

Avobenzone has been found to generate free radicals beyond acceptable safety levels after sitting on the skin for just one hour, and children and pregnant women have been advised not to use products containing it.

Octocrylene, which is known to act as an endocrine disrupter, is used in many sunscreens as a stabilizer. It can also cause skin irritation. According to the Archives of Dermatology, "Octocrylene appears to be a strong allergen leading to contact dermatitis in children and mostly photoallergic contact dermatitis in adults."

Chemical UV filters can also have harmful effects on the environment. Octocrylene does not seem to be effectively contained in wastewater treatment plants, and studies in Switzerland have indicated that it accumulates in fish. Oxybenzone, a chemical UV-B filter often used in combination with avobenzone, has been found to negatively impact reef ecosystems and biodiversity.

Physical UV filters, in contrast, have an excellent safety profile. The FDA has long considered zinc oxide to be a safe ingredient for both external use and as a food additive, even in infant formula.

Considering all these factors, physical UV blockers represent the best choice overall. The main challenge in getting consumers to use sunscreens based on physical filters is purely cosmetic: zinc oxide and titanium dioxide tend to feel thick and greasy, and are visible on the skin, leaving a white residue. However,

new advances mean there are now an increasing number of sunscreens that use these ingredients in formulations that allow for clear application.

When evaluating a sunscreen, the most important considerations should be safety and effectiveness. Carefully examine the ingredients and make use of all available information to make the best choices for yourself and your family.

Jason Barbaria is director of marketing at Dermagenics, a skin care line that includes sunscreen, cleansers, and moisturizers.



Learn what to look for to get the right sunscreen.

Lavender

An Essential Oil for Fundamental Health

Laurie Chance Smith

Lavender essential oil is a one-stop medicine chest, helping to reduce anxiety, fatigue, and stress and balance hormones, increase the immune response, lower blood pressure, and relieve pain. To utilize lavender's healing benefits at home, mix five to 10 drops of lavender essential oil in one ounce of jojoba oil or unscented lotion. (Essential oils shouldn't be applied directly to the skin; it's best to partner them with a carrier oil, liquid, or lotion.)

EARACHES

For earaches, dab one drop of lavender massage oil behind the ear and rub gently. Alternatively, place one drop of lavender oil on a cotton ball and carefully place inside the outer ear.

HEADACHES

Inhaling lavender is also effective for headache relief. Add a few drops to a bowl of warm water and breathe. Gently rub lavender massage lotion on the temples, forehead, and base of the neck.

COLDS

Lavender oil can also help break up coughs and clear sinuses. Colorado-based holistic aromatherapist Nicola McGill suggests the regular home-use of antiseptic essential oils such as lavender to help avoid colds and other infectious diseases. Add a few drops to a vaporizer to help clear colds and infuse the home with lavender's scent.

STRESS

At night, six to eight drops of lavender added to a warm bath helps melt away stress and relieve fatigue. Blend a footbath by adding three drops of lavender to a bowl of warm water, sink your feet in, and relax. For help inducing sleep, add two or three drops of lavender essential oil to the underside corner of your pillow.

TRANQUIL AROMA

A human takes 23,040 breaths a day, and each inhale floods the system with scent. Rely on lavender's tranquil aroma

to clear the way toward peaceful days.



Lavender is loaded with wellness properties.

The Power of Tea Tree Oil

Is your medicine cabinet full of ointments, oils, and creams that each treats one specific ailment? Maybe you can cut down on some of the clutter by adding nature's own wonder drug, tea tree oil, instead.

What is Tea Tree Oil

Produced in Australia from the tree *M. alternifolia*, tea tree oil acts as an antiseptic, fungicide, insect deterrent, and more. It has been used in Australia by aborigines for generations and, since the country's colonization, has spread to the rest of the world.

Tea tree oil, which can be found as an essential oil as well as in creams, ointments, shampoo, and even toothpaste, can be used to treat a staggering variety of conditions, including: acne, arthritis, athlete's foot,

burns, cuts, dandruff, eczema, gingivitis, infection, insect bites and stings, lice, muscle sprains, psoriasis, and rashes. And that's just a partial list!

Potential Benefits

The exact cause of tea tree oil's effectiveness is difficult to ascertain, and researchers are still looking into just how much the natural remedy can do for us. Newer studies have looked at its ability to stop the spread of sometimes-deadly methicillin-resistant staphylococcus aureus in hospitals.

Use Safely

While there are plenty of benefits to using tea tree oil, its strength can also be problematic, even dangerous. The Mayo Clinic advises that it's not safe to ingest or take tea tree oil internally, and it is considered particularly harmful if

ingested by pets.

Also, like most natural remedies, the US Food and Drug Administration does not regulate tea tree oil as it does other medicines, leaving no standard quality of tea tree oil products. And, while many people enthusiastically support tea tree oil, it is no substitute for professional medical care.

Yet, many people agree that, if nothing else, tea tree oil should be a part of your first aid kit in case of bites, burns, or scrapes. But who knows? You might find yourself using it for much more than that.

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