

# SUN SMARTS



*As we head back outdoors, it's important to stay mindful of the latest in sunscreen technology, as well as some protective pointers for clients.*

**By Katie O'Reilly**

No longer a mere beach-bag accoutrement, sunscreen has become part of our daily routines. While we certainly slather it on to protect us from the summer sun, dermatologists recommend that we apply it every morning and repeatedly throughout each day as well—which may be why consumers and regulators have increasingly raised questions about sunscreen's photoprotective chemicals. As a skincare pro, how do you help clients navigate the SPF market? Read on for expert input on the latest intel in safe sun enjoyment.



## ESSENTIAL INGREDIENTS

There are two main types of active sunscreen ingredients: chemical and physical. “Chemical ingredients, such as avobenzone and oxybenzone, work by absorbing UV rays and reducing their penetration into the skin,” says Adele Haimovic, MD, New York-based dermatologist and spokesperson for The Skin Cancer Foundation. “Physical ingredients, such as titanium dioxide and zinc oxide, are naturally occurring inorganic (mineral) ingredients that stay on top of the skin and deflect UV rays.”

For many years, chemical ingredients reigned supreme as the most effective means of sun protection. However, recently, they have received some flack from those in the clean beauty and environmental-protection arenas. For instance, chemical ingredient oxybenzone has been implicated in coral reef degradation, encouraging many beaches in tropical locales like Hawaii and Australia to prohibit its use. And last year, FDA researchers revealed the results of a small clinical trial showing that chemical ingredients including oxybenzone, avobenzone, ecamsule and octocrylene can be detected in the blood after sunscreen application—but Dr. Haimovic is quick to note that absorption does *not* equal toxicity. Despite those findings, “FDA-approved chemical sunscreen ingredients have been used in the United States for many years, and there is no evidence that these ingredients are harmful,” she says.

Those concerned about the effects of chemical sunscreens can opt for physical sunscreens. Zinc, for example, naturally provides broad-spectrum protection and soothes inflammation, says Lisa Markel, president of Seriously Fab. “It’s great for clients with acne-prone skin,” she says. Chemical sunscreens require a combination of several organic filters—such as benzophenones, cinnimates and salicylates—to capture all UV wavelengths, explains Karen Asquith, national director of education for GM Collin. As a result, some people eschew chemical sun protectors because they find the filters irritating to the skin. “They can produce heat when they absorb the sun’s rays,” she says. That being said, aloe vera is a great ingredient to counter irritants in chemical sunscreens, says Markel. While mineral sunscreens are effective, Erin Larson, director of education for HydroPeptide, notes that they often fall short in the experiential category. “They can be thick and white, so [manufacturers] stock mineral sun protection products with added tint and scent to increase the likelihood of it being used regularly and properly,” she says.

Some sunscreen formulas combine both physical and chemical ingredients. “However, it’s important to note that chemical filters are not considered reef-safe,” says Asquith.



**Physical sunscreens, such as zinc, not only provide broad-spectrum protection, but they also soothe acne-prone skin.**

“So if clients are snorkeling or scuba diving, it’s imperative to find a physical blocker clearly labelled ‘reef-safe.’”

## PROTECTION POINTERS

When it comes to UV rays and SPF protection, there is often much confusion. Ultraviolet A rays (remember it by saying, “A is for aging”) have longer wavelengths, while ultraviolet B rays are shorter and associated with burns (think “B is for burning”). SPF factor only accounts for UVB protection. “Though UVA and UVB rays damage the skin differently, exposure to either will damage the DNA in skin cells, and thus produce genetic defects that can lead to skin cancer,” says Dr. Haimovic. Broad-spectrum sunscreens protect against both UVA radiation—which accounts for 90 percent of UV radiation, penetrates clouds and glass, and causes free radical generation and thus contributes to skin’s aging—and UVB radiation, which is more culpable when it comes to sunburns and cancer. Therefore, Dr. Haimovic urges all skincare pros to solely retail broad-spectrum products.

Another common misconception, says Larson, is that higher SPF levels require less frequent reapplication. “People assume that SPF 100 would provide twice the sun protection as SPF 50,” she says. “This is misleading because even SPF 30 will protect against 97 percent of rays. Since no sunscreen can protect against 100 percent of rays, there is actually less than a 3 percent difference in protection between an SPF 30 and higher SPF products.” What the SPF number reflects is how long it would take the sun to burn the skin with the product versus without it. For

## “WHAT’S MOST IMPORTANT IS CHOOSING A BROAD-SPECTRUM PRODUCT THAT SUITS YOUR SKIN AND ACTIVITY.”

example, wearing SPF 30 means that it would take the skin 30 times longer to burn than if you weren't wearing any sunscreen at all.

It's imperative to remind your clients that sun protection is a must on a daily basis, no matter the season or weather. “Damaging rays penetrate clouds,” reminds Asquith. Sunscreen should be applied 20 minutes before sun exposure. “Clients should apply two tablespoons—equivalent to about a shot glass full—of sunscreen to the entire body, and a nickel-size dollop to the face,” instructs Dr. Haimovic. “Remind them to reapply it every two hours or more, especially after swimming, heavy perspiration or toweling off.” Nicole Landon, national training director for Guinot USA, reminds that *all* areas need to be fully covered. “Don't forget the ears, back of the neck, scalp, tops of the feet and hands!” And for those who work outside, wearing protective UPF clothing is crucial, says Asquith.

### FORMULA FACTS

These days, sunscreen comes in myriad forms beyond just lotion, including gel, spray, cream, stick and even makeup. Thanks to all of the options, clients can now choose the right formulation for their own needs. For instance, Asquith notes that creams are good for dry skin, while gels work well with oily skin. Sprays are popular among athletes and parents of small children. It's important to note, however, that when talking to clients about using spray sunscreen, you should provide instruction. “Teach them to use their hands to evenly distribute and rub the product in,” Larson

**Remind clients to reapply often—every two hours or more!**

suggests. “And when protecting the face, always spray it into the hands first and then apply it to reduce excess inhalation.”

Clients who have sensitive skin or are prone to acne or rosacea may find that physical sunscreens are less irritating than chemical versions. “Additionally, people with these conditions should avoid sunscreens containing preservatives, fragrances or alcohol,” advises Dr. Haimovic, “and they should seek out non-greasy formulations, as well.”

Many cosmetics now include sunscreen in their formulations, an added bonus to be sure. Still, Asquith cautions clients against relying on them solely for adequate sun protection, as most foundations, primers, and BB and CC creams with SPF lack sufficient guard against UVA/B rays. Plus, most people don't apply cosmetics every two hours, and as a result inadvertently increase their risk of sun damage rather than minimizing it. “Instead, train clients to religiously apply protection beneath cosmetic products,” she says. It's also essential to keep track of the product's expiration date. Some have expiration dates printed on the bottles. For those that don't, Asquith recommends “writing the month and year on the bottle with a marker to ensure clients aren't using a product that's broken down and won't properly protect.”

These types of products are only the beginning. As the importance for sunscreen continues to grow, there will certainly be new formulations on the horizon. Dr. Haimovic is excited to see that SPF is increasingly incorporated into moisturizers and antiaging creams. She recommends “seeking out newer formulas that both prevent future damage as well as treat existing sun damage with ingredients such as vitamin C and peptides.” Landon believes sunscreen's “next big thing” will involve addressing the blue light that filters from cell phones, tablets, computers and TVs. “Many people don't realize the effects these devices have on the skin,” she says. Asquith even predicts that one day soon we'll be able to pop pills providing daily UVA/B protection.

At the end of the day, “the best sunscreen is the one you'll use,” says Dr. Haimovic. “What's most important is choosing a broad-spectrum product that suits your skin and activity.” **DS**

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