

Fun Fact of the Week

Consumer Reports Names Top Sunscreens for 2019*

By Kathleen Doheny

Chemical sunscreens are once again the top performers in the *Consumer Reports* annual ratings, outperforming those with mineral or natural ingredients such as titanium dioxide and zinc oxide.

"This has been the case for several years in a row," says Trisha Calvo, deputy editor of health and food at *Consumer Reports*. "We haven't been able to find a mineral sunscreen we can recommend. They kind of fall in the middle of our ratings."



However, she says, "I can't say all chemical sunscreens are better than mineral."

Top Lotions

La Roche-Posay, Anthelios 60 Melt-in Sunscreen Milk, \$36.

BullFrog, Land Sport Quik Gel, SPF 50, \$13

Top Sprays

Trader Joe's, Spray SPF 50+, \$6

Banana Boat, SunComfort Clear UltraMist, Spray SPF 50+ Sunscreens, \$13

Top Sunscreens Without Oxybenzone

Walgreens Hydrating Lotion SPF 50 sunscreen, \$3

Hawaiian Tropic Sheer Touch Ultra Radiance Lotion SPF 50 sunscreen, \$8

Top Mineral Sunscreens

California Kids #supersensitive Lotion SPF 30+ sunscreen, \$20

Badger Active Natural Mineral Cream SPF 30 Unscented sunscreen, \$16

This year, *Consumer Reports* tested 82 [sunscreen](#) products. "The top 10, the ones we recommend that got the higher ratings, all of them contain oxybenzone."

Some consumers are concerned about oxybenzone, she says, because [the FDA in February asked sunscreen makers to provide additional safety data](#) on 12 common chemical active ingredients in sunscreen, including oxybenzone, avobenzone, [homosalate](#), octinoxate, octisalate, and octocrylene, among others.

The request was part of an FDA proposed regulation that ultimately would allow sunscreen manufacturers to market new products without having to get a new drug application approved if the product's ingredients were recognized as generally safe and effective. The agency wants more data on those 12 chemical ingredients before making that determination.

"That made people think they were saying those were not safe, and that is not what the FDA was saying," Calvo says. The agency is calling for more data and research. But oxybenzone is the most concerning, she says, as some research suggests it may be absorbed through the [skin](#) more than previously believed.

The American Academy of Pediatrics suggests picking sunscreens for children without oxybenzone due to potential concerns about [hormone](#) disruption.

Sunscreen Rankings

As in the past, *Consumer Reports* used a testing protocol modeled on the one the FDA mandates for sunscreen makers. They use those standards to identify differences in performance between products.

Three samples of each product are tested in a lab for their ability to block the sun's rays. The products are also tested on people to see if the sun protection factor (SPF) listed on the label is accurate.

Of the 82 products tested, including lotions, sprays, and sticks, 10 received an overall score of excellent and are recommended. Another 36 got a very good score, considered acceptable.

Consumer Reports also noted eight of the best tested by ingredient and delivery method.

Dermatologists' Views

Michele S. Green, MD, a dermatologist at Lenox Hill Hospital, reviewed the list of recommended sunscreens. "These are all excellent choices," she says, and the list includes some that she recommends for patients.

She explains the types of sunscreens this way: Those with zinc oxide or titanium dioxide are physical (sometimes called mineral) sunscreens; they "sit on top of your skin and block out the sun's rays before they are absorbed."

Chemical sunscreens, such as those with avobenzone and other ingredients, are absorbed into the skin "where a chemical reaction occurs, changing the radiation into heat, then releasing it from the skin."

Responding to potential concerns about oxybenzone after the FDA sought more data on chemical sunscreens, the American Academy of Dermatology states that: "It's important to understand that the proposed rule does not conclude that the sunscreens currently on the market are unsafe."

More Sun Protection Tips

The report is out earlier than usual this year, Calvo says, because market research has found people tend to start buying sunscreens in April. "Sixty-nine percent of the 150 million sunscreens sold in 2018 were sold between late April and mid-August," she says.

"It's no longer just a beach weather product," she says, an indication people may be thinking of year-round skin protection.

The American Academy of Dermatology and others recommend a sunscreen with an SPF of 30 or higher.

Despite some concerns about effectiveness of some sunscreens and concerns over some ingredients, people shouldn't stop using sunscreens, Calvo says. But they should also look on sunscreen as one part of a total sun protection strategy. "No sunscreen blocks 100% of the rays," she says. Sun protection should also include sitting in shade, avoiding the sun when rays are strongest -- about 10 a.m. until 4 p.m. -- and wearing a hat, sunglasses, and long sleeves.

*<https://www.webmd.com/melanoma-skin-cancer/news/20190430/consumer-reports-names-top-sunscreens-for-2019>