

Debunking Sunscreen Myths: What You Need to Know

MYTH

“Sunscreen isn’t safe. It might even cause cancer.”

FACT

There is no scientific evidence that sunscreen causes cancer. On the contrary, sun exposure without protection is a proven and significant risk factor for skin cancer, the most common cancer in the U.S.

Sunscreen Safety Is Backed by Science

- The FDA rigorously regulates sunscreen to ensure it is safe, effective, and high-quality.
- All active ingredients used in U.S. sunscreens are either FDA-approved or recognized as GRASE (Generally Recognized as Safe and Effective). The FDA continues to monitor these products based on evolving scientific evidence.
- Sunscreen ingredients undergo more testing and scrutiny than most over-the-counter products.

Sunscreen Types and Choosing the Right One

Both physical and chemical sunscreens are safe and effective. Choose the one that fits your skin type and comfort level:

Physical (Mineral) Sunscreen

- How it works: Sits on skin’s surface and reflects UV rays.
- Best for: Sensitive skin.
- Look for: Zinc oxide or titanium dioxide.

Chemical Sunscreen

- How it works: Absorbs into the skin and soaks up UV rays like a sponge.
- Best for: Those who prefer a lighter feel and no white residue.
- Look for: Avobenzone, Octisalate, Octocrylene, Homosalate, or Octinoxate.

The Real Risk: Unprotected Sun Exposure

- One in five Americans will develop skin cancer in their lifetime.
- Melanoma, the deadliest form of skin cancer, claims nearly 20 lives in the U.S. every day.
- Exposure to ultraviolet (UV) rays from the sun is the most preventable risk factor for skin cancer.
- People who don’t use sun protection (like sunscreen or protective clothing) are at significantly increased risk of skin cancer.
- Be cautious about misinformation. Many social media influencers spreading these claims do not have medical training. Board-certified dermatologists and leading health organizations like the American Academy of Dermatology and the FDA recommend daily sunscreen use as a safe and essential part of skin cancer prevention.

If you’re concerned about certain ingredients, opt for a different formulation. If it’s broad-spectrum, water-resistant, and SPF 30+, it will help protect you.

Ask about Our Dermatologist-Recommended Sunscreens

At Advanced Dermatology and Cosmetic Surgery, we offer dermatologist-recommended sunscreens in our offices and in our [online shop](#). Brands we carry include Proscriptix FX, EltaMD, ISDIN, Obagi, Revision Skincare, Skinbetter Science, and ZO Skin Health.

Our clinicians can help you choose the sunscreen that's best for your skin type, activity level, and personal preference.

Reef-Safe: What to Know

Many sunscreens are now formulated to be "reef-safe," meaning they are free of ingredients like oxybenzone and octinoxate, which may contribute to coral reef damage.

Mineral sunscreens in particular tend to be reef-safe and a great choice for those looking to protect both their skin and marine life.

Still Have Questions?

Speak with a board-certified dermatologist about creating a sun protection plan that works for you.

Protect Your Skin: Say YES to Sun Protection and NO to Skin Cancer

Follow these simple steps to protect your skin every day:

- Seek shade, especially between 10 AM and 2 PM
- Wear sun-protective clothing, including hats and sunglasses
- Apply broad-spectrum, SPF 30+ sunscreen to all exposed skin
- Reapply every 2 hours, or after swimming/sweating

Source: This information is based on guidance from the American Academy of Dermatology (AAD) and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA).