

ConsumerReports®

Sunscreens for safe fun in the sun

Choose the wrong sunscreen and you or your kids could get burned. Although most of the 18 top-selling products we tested protected very well against UVB rays, the tested Banana Boat Kids product was poor against UVA. UVB radiation causes sunburn; UVA radiation penetrates deeper, tanning and aging skin. UV radiation may promote skin cancer in two ways: by damaging the DNA in skin cells and by weakening the body's natural defenses against cancer cells.

The tested sunscreens have an SPF between 30 and 75+. Most claim "broad spectrum" protection, against both UVA and UVB. All things being equal, if you sunburn after 20 minutes without sunscreen, an SPF 30 product would protect you for about 10 hours (20 minutes x 30). But in reality, sun intensity, geographic location, skin type, and other factors come into play, so SPF is simply a relative measure of protection.

We tested the sunscreens on people—before and after immersion in freshwater—and on clear plastic plates, for a new test mandated by the Food and Drug Administration requiring that products claiming broad-spectrum protection have a minimum "critical wavelength." We also checked whether each product stained cotton, polyester, rayon/spandex, and nylon/spandex.

What we found. Seven products were very good against UVA, were excellent against UVB even after water immersion for 80 minutes, and passed the critical wavelength test.

But Aveeno and Neutrogena Sensitive Skin were just OK for UVB protection, and some others were effective when dry but less so after a dunking. Two that claim broad-spectrum protection, Alba Botanica and Banana Boat Kids, failed the wavelength test.

No one type protected best, and price had nothing to do with performance. La Roche-Posay, \$20.59 per ounce, rated below No-Ad, 59 cents. All but one sunscreen, Neutrogena Sensitive Skin, stained one or more fabrics.

To stay safe in the sun, wear a hat and protective clothing. When using any sunscreen:

Check ingredients. Oxybenzone may interfere with hormones in the body, and nanoscale zinc and titanium oxides have been linked to potential reproductive and

developmental effects. In skin, retinyl palmitate converts readily to retinoids, associated with a risk of birth defects in people using retinoid-containing acne medications. Pregnant women may want to avoid products with retinyl palmitate, noted in the Ratings.

Spray carefully. The FDA has said it's exploring the risks of inhaling spray sunscreens. Avoid using sprays on kids, and spray sunscreen onto your hands to apply it to your face.

Use enough. Use 2 to 3 tablespoons of lotion on most of your body, or spray as much as can be rubbed in, then repeat. Reapply every 2 hours and after swimming or sweating.

Bottom line. No-Ad and Walgreens are CR Best Buys. Both have a classic beachy aroma. Any sunscreen you use should be water resistant, with an SPF of at least 30. Above 30, you get little extra protection.



RUB IT IN These and several others earned high marks. Labels may be changing soon.

Ratings

All tested products

In performance order, within types.

CR Best Buy Recommended

● Excellent ● Very good ○ Good ● Fair ● Poor

Rec.	Product	Cost (oz.)	Type	Overall score	UVA	UVB	UVB after water	Staining
				0				
				100				
				P F G V G E				

SPF 30 Blocks 97 percent of UV rays.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	All Terrain AquaSport	\$ 4.00	lotion	88	●	●	●	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Banana Boat Clear UltraMist Sport Performance Active Dry Protect	1.63	spray	87	●	●	●	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Coppertone Sport High Performance Ultra Sweatproof	1.67	spray	87	●	●	●	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Eco All Natural Sunscreen Body	4.72	lotion	87	●	●	●	●
	Blue Lizard Australian Sunscreen Regular	3.40	lotion	76	○	●	●	●
	Hawaiian Tropic Island Sport Clear	1.62	spray	70	○	●	●	●
	Dermatone The Ultimate Sunscreen for Fishermen	3.12	lotion	57	○	○	○	○
	Aveeno Active Naturals Natural Protection MineralBlock	3.67	lotion	52	○	○	○	○

SPF 40-50 Blocks 97 to 98 percent of UV rays.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No-Ad with Aloe & Vitamin E SPF 45	0.59	lotion	88	●	●	●	●
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Walgreens Continuous Spray Sport SPF 50	1.30	spray	87	●	●	●	●
	Coppertone Water Babies SPF 50	1.38	lotion	82	●	●	●	●
	La Roche-Posay Anhelios 40 with Mexoryl SX SPF 40	20.59	lotion	78	●	●	○	○
	Neutrogena Ultra Sheer Body Mist with Helioplex SPF 45	1.90	spray	78	●	●	○	○
	Alba Botanica Natural Very Emollient Sunblock Sport SPF 45	2.75	lotion	49	○	○	○	○

SPF 50 PLUS Blocks up to 99 percent of UV rays.

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Coppertone Oil Free Foaming SPF 75+	1.67	spray foam	87	●	●	●	●
	Coppertone UltraGuard Continuous Spray SPF 70+	1.67	spray	73	●	●	○	○
	Neutrogena Sensitive Skin SPF 60+	3.50	lotion	59	○	○	○	○
	Banana Boat Kids Tear-Free Sting-Free SPF 50+	1.19	lotion	37	○	○	○	○

¹ Contains retinyl palmitate, which pregnant women may want to avoid. ² Products labeled "waterproof," "very water resistant," or "resistant for 80 minutes" were tested for 80 minutes; Alba, labeled "water resistant," was tested for 40 minutes; La Roche-Posay doesn't claim water resistance. ³ Doesn't make a UVA or broad-spectrum claim.

BY THE NUMBERS

13,782

Total minutes test subjects sat in front of sunshine simulators.