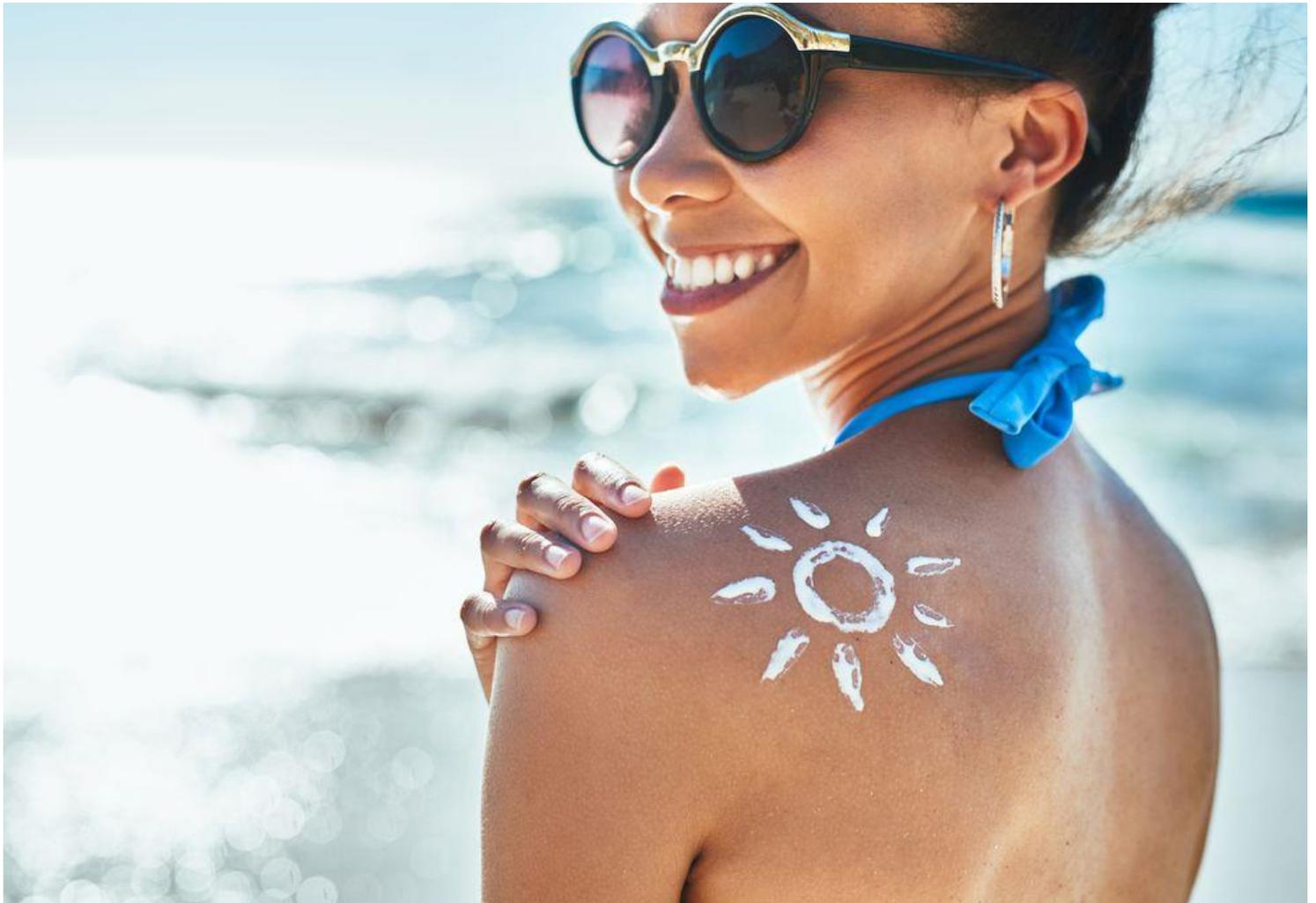


Whoa, What: SPF 100 Sunscreen Might Actually Work Better Than SPF 50



By Deanna Pai May 25, 2018



Every day, there's a headline about how fill-in-the-blank is wrecking your skin (and life).

Your phone? Maybe. The sun? Definitely. Your staple sunscreen? Probably not.

And despite being told for years that SPF 100 sunscreen is pretty much B.S., new research shows that's not actually the case. Is there any truth in this world?!

These are the outdated skin-care claims you definitely need to stop believing:

The claim: Consistent sunscreen use prevents you from getting your daily dose of vitamin D from good old sunshine.



The real deal: This is sort of true, since sunscreen prevents UVB rays (which cause a reaction that results in vitamin D production) from reaching your skin cells. But before you run outside sans SPF, know this: There are other means of soaking up vitamin D.

“You shouldn’t skip sunscreen in an attempt to get D,” says Emmy Graber, M.D., a dermatologist in Boston. Instead, obtain it through your diet or a supplement. It’s available in only a few food sources—like fatty fish, including salmon and mackerel, and egg yolks—so consider a supplement that contains at least the recommended daily value of 600 IU.

The claim: Blue light from phones and devices and infrared rays emitted by said devices, are giving you wrinkles and dark spots.



The real deal: Yes, blue and infrared light might (might!) lead to skin aging, according to studies. But the exact extent is still TBD. In fact, says Graber, both wavelengths can actually be beneficial in a controlled setting.



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Case in point: Derms tend to use these types of light in-office to treat acne and other skin issues. (Again, that's in the hands of a professional.) Still nervous? New sunscreen formulas, like Coola Organic SPF 30 Full Spectrum 360° Sun Silk Drops (\$46, [sephora.com](https://www.sephora.com)), protect against all wavelengths of light, including UV and infrared.

Graber also recommends antioxidants, particularly vitamin C and ferulic acid, because “they make your skin cells stronger and more robust against damage.” Apply an antioxidant serum like Drunk Elephant C-Firma Day Serum (\$80, [sephora.com](https://www.sephora.com)), which pairs C and ferulic acid, twice a day.



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THE CLAIM: CERTAIN CHEMICAL SUN BLOCKERS IN SUNSCREENS BREAK DOWN INTO TOXIC PARTICLES AND MESS WITH HORMONES.



The real deal: Slow your roll! First, these sun-absorbing chemical ingredients, like avobenzone and oxybenzone, are some of the best around for broadspectrum coverage, meaning they protect skin from both UVA and UVB rays, says NYC dermatologist [Kristina Goldenberg, M.D.](#)

Plus, the evidence for this claim is sparse, and the amounts of chemicals studied aren't the same as what you're applying to your skin—or even what's tested on humans. One report did the math and found it would take nearly 380 liters of sunscreen containing oxybenzone to reach the point of potential harmful effects.



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What's more, sunscreens with these sun blockers, like La Roche-Posay Anthelios 60 Face Ultra Light Sunscreen Fluid (\$30, [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)), come widely recommended by derms. Ultimately, the risk for skin cancer is way higher than the still-unconfirmed risk (if any) of these chemicals—it's not worth sacrificing your skin health on speculation.

THE CLAIM: A HIGHER SPF NUMBER ISN'T ALWAYS BETTER, SO IT DOESN'T MATTER WHICH ONE YOU PURCHASE.

The real deal: Higher SPFs really may be more powerful, per the latest data. A sunscreen with broadspectrum SPF 100 was significantly more protective against sunburn than one with SPF 50, a study found, indicating that the higher the SPF number, the better. (The research didn't address the effect on skin-aging UVA rays.)

So if you burn easily, it may be worthwhile upgrading to SPF 100, like Neutrogena Ultra Sheer Dry-Touch Sunscreen Broad Spectrum SPF 100+ (\$13, at drugstores). But note: No matter how high the SPF, you still need to reapply every two hours and after you sweat or swim, says Goldenberg.



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THE CLAIM: SPRAY-ON SUNSCREEN MIGHT BE DANGEROUS AND EVEN DAMAGE YOUR LUNGS WHEN INHALED.

The real deal: There's no evidence that this is a risk. However, you probably try to avoid taking in a big gulp of air when you're spritzing hair spray or perfume, and you should do the same with sunscreen—just in case. “Hold your breath when you're spraying, or just don't spray it directly onto your face,” says Goldenberg.



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There's a far more pressing concern with spray-on sunscreens anyway: Even a light breeze can keep you from getting enough SPF coverage, and you're more likely to miss parts of your body. Still prefer the spray? "The safest way to apply it is to put it on your hands and rub it on your body," says Graber.

Or hold the nozzle close to your skin, then rub the sunscreen in. Try Australian Gold Botanical Sunscreen SPF 50 Natural Spray (\$15, australiangold.com).