

## Things you might not know about sunscreen

While many people believe that using sunscreen will protect them against developing skin cancer, the evidence is not conclusive.

There is a great deal of conflicting information about sunscreen, but the most comprehensive data we have found comes from the Environmental Working Group (EWG), which has been following this issue since 2007. They write, “Every major public health authority — FDA, the National Cancer Institute and the International Agency for Research on Cancer — has concluded that the available data do not support the assertion that sunscreens alone reduce the rate of skin cancer.”



### Ingredients to avoid

#### RETINYL PALMITATE

This form of vitamin A is added to some sunscreens and may be listed under various names, but all of them include the word “retinyl.” While vitamin A offers many benefits, when it is added to sunscreen, it can be harmful. The research on

When the sun hits our skin, our bodies make vitamin D (which is actually a hormone, not a vitamin).

### The skin cancer rate has tripled since the 1970s

Two common forms of skin cancer, squamous cell and basal, are rarely fatal, but melanoma skin cancer is dangerous. White males appear to be at highest risk, but oddly, melanomas generally are found on parts of the body that do not get much sun exposure.

Also surprising, people who work out-of-doors and get regular sun exposure don’t appear to be as susceptible to skin cancer as those who have less frequent exposure. It is possible that the vitamin D outdoor workers receive plays a protective role.

The vitamin D our bodies create from sun exposure may help protect us from skin cancer.

“About 25 percent of Americans have borderline low levels of vitamin D, and 8 percent have a serious deficiency. Breast-fed infants, people with darker skin and people who have limited sun exposure are at greatest risk for vitamin D deficiency....Check with your doctor to find out whether you should get a vitamin D test or take seasonal or year-round supplements.” EWG

retinyl palmitate shows that it promotes skin tumors and lesions on animals.

Swedish researchers found that women who avoid sun exposure are at higher risk for heart disease, possibly because of low levels of vitamin D. This was published in the *Journal of Internal Medicine*, March 16, 2016.

### OXYBENZONE

Despite the fact that oxybenzone has been shown to be a hormone disruptor, the majority of non-mineral sunscreens on the market contain it. (Non-mineral sunscreens are those that do not contain sunblocks like zinc oxide and titanium dioxide.)

The synthetic chemicals in most commercial sunscreen products have also been found to damage aquatic life.

### Minerals used in sunscreens

A growing number of sunscreens use added minerals to help block the two types of ultraviolet radiation — UVA and UVB. The most commonly used are zinc oxide and titanium dioxide.