

## Sunscreen is still best bet for your skin

Dear Paula, I noticed that European Union regulations have a warning for sunscreens containing oxybenzone. I read a little about this ingredient on the Internet and I must say I am a bit worried now. Is it safe? Does oxybenzone interfere with your hormones?

-- Diana, via email

Dear Diana, From what I can tell, there has been some alarmist and false information floating around on the Internet about many sunscreen ingredients. However, most of these risk-related comments are either not supported by published research or the only research performed was in animal or in vitro studies. As for real use on humans, the research is quite reassuring. The most current I've seen about oxybenzone (as well as other sunscreen ingredients) comes from the Therapeutics Research Unit at the University of Queensland Princess Alexandra Hospital in Brisbane, Australia, and was published in Skin Pharmacology and Physiology. This extensive study noted: "The penetration and retention of five commonly used sunscreen agents (avobenzone, octinoxate, octocrylene, oxybenzone and padimate O) in human skin was ... too low to cause any significant toxicity to the underlying human keratinocytes (skin)." And the researchers surmised that penetration beyond the skin cells was undetectable.

It seems that all sunscreen ingredients (both organic and inorganic), when subject to vitro research (controlled laboratory conditions in petri dishes), show a potential for some problems; however, these problems do not seem to arise in actual usage. Research is ongoing and I am following it closely. For now, the benefits of using sunscreen (preventing sun damage) far outweigh any potential risk from sunscreen ingredients.

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