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We're Dermatologists: Here's Exactly How We Protect Our Skin During A Day At The Beach

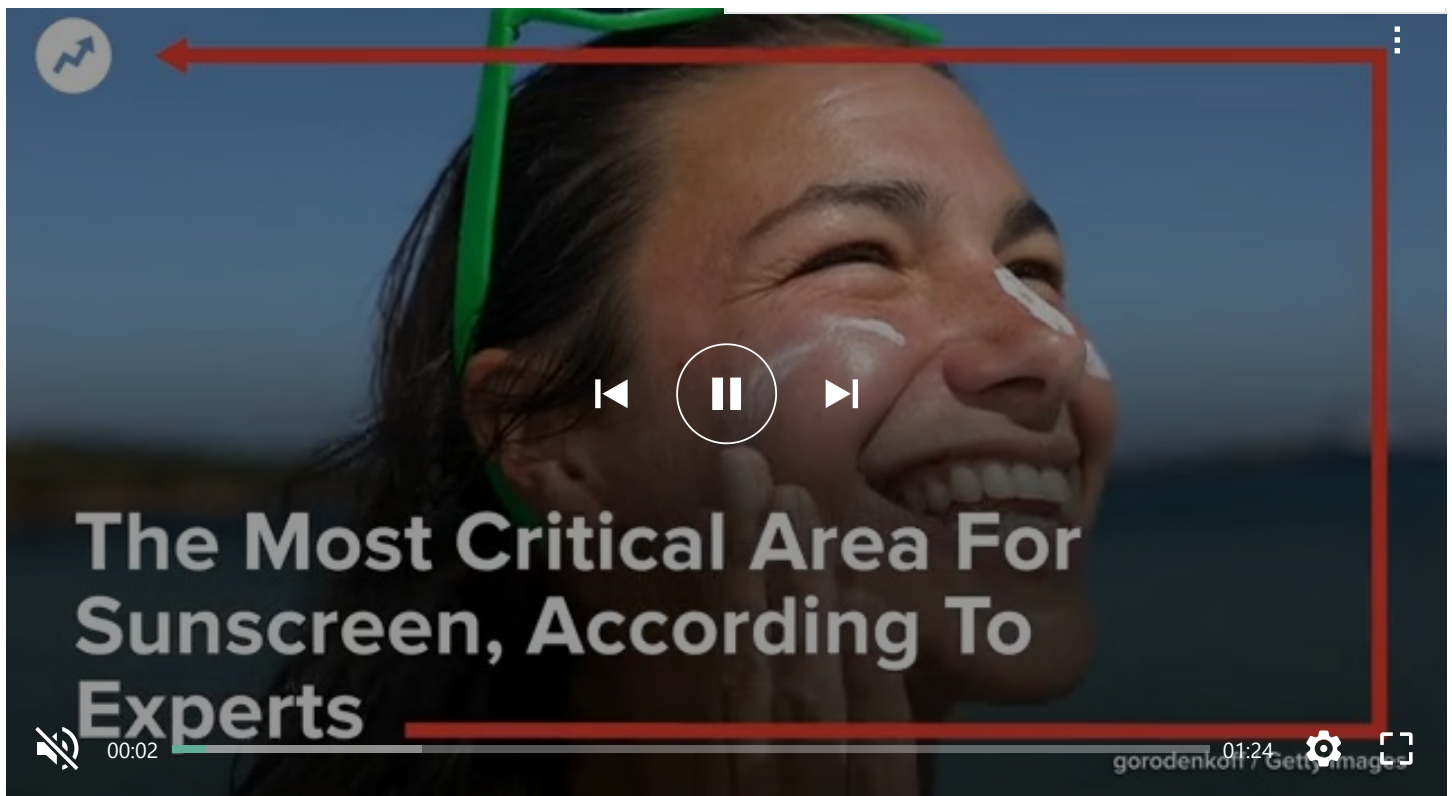
If you're just bringing sunscreen and a hat, you need these tips to level up.

By Julie Kendrick

Jul 4, 2025, 07:00 AM EDT

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If you're even remotely concerned about your health, you probably pack a bottle of [sunscreen](#), a sun hat and maybe an umbrella for a day at the beach. But if you ask a dermatologist how they do a day at the beach, things are *leveled up*.

To protect your skin against the dangers of skin cancer — and even if you think you're immune from skin cancer, maybe the threat of wrinkles and sun spots will convince you — take a cue from these experts.

Here's what they do before leaving the house.

If you've had the time to plan ahead, think about how your current skin products will react to a day of sun. "I avoid applying certain products that can increase sun sensitivity, such as retinols and retinoids," said dermatologist [Dr. Regine J. Mathieu](#). "At a minimum, skip them the day before, day of and the day after going to the beach, to decrease risk of

irritation.”

Next, you’ll want to make sure everyone applies sunscreen well before leaving the house. “I use SPF 30 or higher, and I always apply it at least 15 minutes before going outside,” said dermatologist [Dr. Nada Elbuluk](#). And this is not just a quick rub here and there — these docs are thorough when applying that protective layer. “I make sure not to forget my ears, my hands and the tops of my feet,” said dermatologist [Dr. Claire Wolinsky](#).

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Dermatologist [Dr. Howard Sobel](#), who often brings his kids to the beach, pays particular attention to the area under the eyes when applying sunscreen. “That area can burn quickly, especially in children,” he said.

They check the weather report, too. “I usually check the UV index first,” said dermatologist [Dr. Mojgan Hosseinipour](#). “It provides a daily forecast of the expected intensity of UV radiation from the sun. I avoid the outdoors when the UV index is high to very high.”

They cover up beyond just using sunscreen.

“Sunscreen is protective, but clothing and hats provide greater protection, so I always cover myself as much as possible,” Wolinsky said. Elbuluk mentioned wearing sunglasses and a wide-brimmed hat.

“Our family wears shirts, pants, hats and swimwear that feature Ultraviolet Protection Factor (UPF), which is designed to block or absorb UV rays, preventing them from penetrating the fabric and reaching skin,” Hosseinipour said. “It’s convenient because it doesn’t require reapplication of sunscreen on covered areas, which can be challenging with younger kids.”

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Dermatologist [Dr. Ellen Marmur](#), founder of MMSkincare, said: “I always wear a wide-brimmed hat, polarized sunglasses, long flowy pants and a long-sleeved blouse if it’s early in the day. Later in the day, my hat switches to a [Coolibar](#) with the snap-on flaps that cover my neck — very Sahara desert chic — and I wear a sunshirt that’s UPF 50.”



PIXDELUXE VIA GETTY IMAGES

Find shade, whether it's an umbrella or a cabana.

These are some of their favorite UPF brands.

“I always follow the advice of my wife, who is from Australia, where their skin cancer prevention slogan is ‘slip (shirt), slap (hat) and slop (sunscreen),” said dermatologist [Dr. Kenneth Mark](#). “I wear my bathing suit and a long-sleeve [Quicksilver](#) or [Buoy](#) shirt.”

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Other favorite brands for UPF garb? Sobel is a fan of the [Coolibar](#) and [Solbari](#) UPF lines. Dermatologist [Dr. Hadley King](#) said, “I’ve been loving the rashguards from [Lemlem](#) and the sun hats from [Janessa Leone](#), which both offer stylish options for sun protection.”

You might be surprised by what time their beach day starts.

“I avoid peak UV hours by spending time at the beach either in the early morning or close to sunset,” said King. “It’s cooler then, too, and less crowded.”

“I typically arrive at the beach after 3 p.m., when the UV index is moderate or less,” Hosseinipour said. “In general, I aim to be outside when the UV index is low, to prevent any sun-related harm to my skin.”

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Consider a sunset trip to the beach to limit your UV exposure.

They consider how to set up their space.

“I like to face the water instead of facing the sun, to minimize direct sunlight,” said Mark.

Hosseinipour said she looks for shady areas for her family. “Whether it’s finding the shadows created by the lifeguard stand or palm trees, or setting up our UPF umbrella, we’re never sitting under direct sun,” she added.

“I bring a blanket or towel to sit on,” said Mathieu. “According to the World Health Organization, sand can reflect UV radiation up to 10 to 15%, so covering surrounding sand with a protective barrier is not only a comfortable way to avoid the discomfort of sitting on hot sand, but has UV protective benefits as well.”

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“I prefer a cabana situation because it’s difficult to guarantee shade with

an umbrella, particularly if it's windy," King said. Marmur is also a fan. "My family uses one of the new super easy tents from [CoolCaban](#)s," she said.

They reapply sunscreen frequently.

"You need to reapply sunscreen every two hours, or any time after water exposure," Hosseinipour said. Why two hours? "[Research has shown](#) that after we sweat, sunscreen washes off, which results in a patchy droplet appearance on the skin," she said. "The sunscreen redistributes itself on the skin, leading to excessive amounts of sunscreen in some locations and minimal amounts of sunscreen in others. With the redistribution, UV radiation penetrates the skin where sunscreen is no longer present."

Making sure everyone reapplies sunscreen can be a challenge, but Elbuluk had a smart suggestion: Set a timer to remind yourself every two hours.

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Food and drink: They hydrate but skip citrus.

"I avoid bringing lemon or lime wedges for beverages, to avoid something called [phytophotodermatitis](#), which is a burn and/or hyperpigmentation at the areas of skin exposed to citrus juice and UV rays," Wolinsky said.

"I pack high-water-content snacks like grapes, cucumbers, tomatoes and watermelon, since it's important to stay hydrated while out in the sun," Mathieu said. "Water is my go-to beverage of choice, but I also like to pack drinks containing electrolytes. Even a few hours out in the sun can result in dehydration."

They limit exposure and follow up with skin care at home.

Time in the sun is brief for these experts. “I’ll take a long walk, read under the umbrella or go for a quick swim in the waves,” Marmur said. “I never lie out in the sun for more than five minutes to warm up, and even then I have a hat on and a towel draped on my legs.”

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They also limit the time of the outing. For Hosseinipour, it’s about two to three hours. Mathieu said, “I stay at the beach approximately three to four hours, depending on arrival time.” For Sobel, it’s no more than five hours. “There’s an umbrella up whenever possible, and we always take a shaded lunch break from noon to 2, which is when the sun is strongest,” he said.

“When I get home, I like to double cleanse with micellar water and cleanser for my face to remove all the sunscreen residue,” Wolinsky said. “I shower to wash off sunscreen, sand and salt water, and then I apply moisturizer for face and body.”

Looking for a great sunscreen? These are sure bets.

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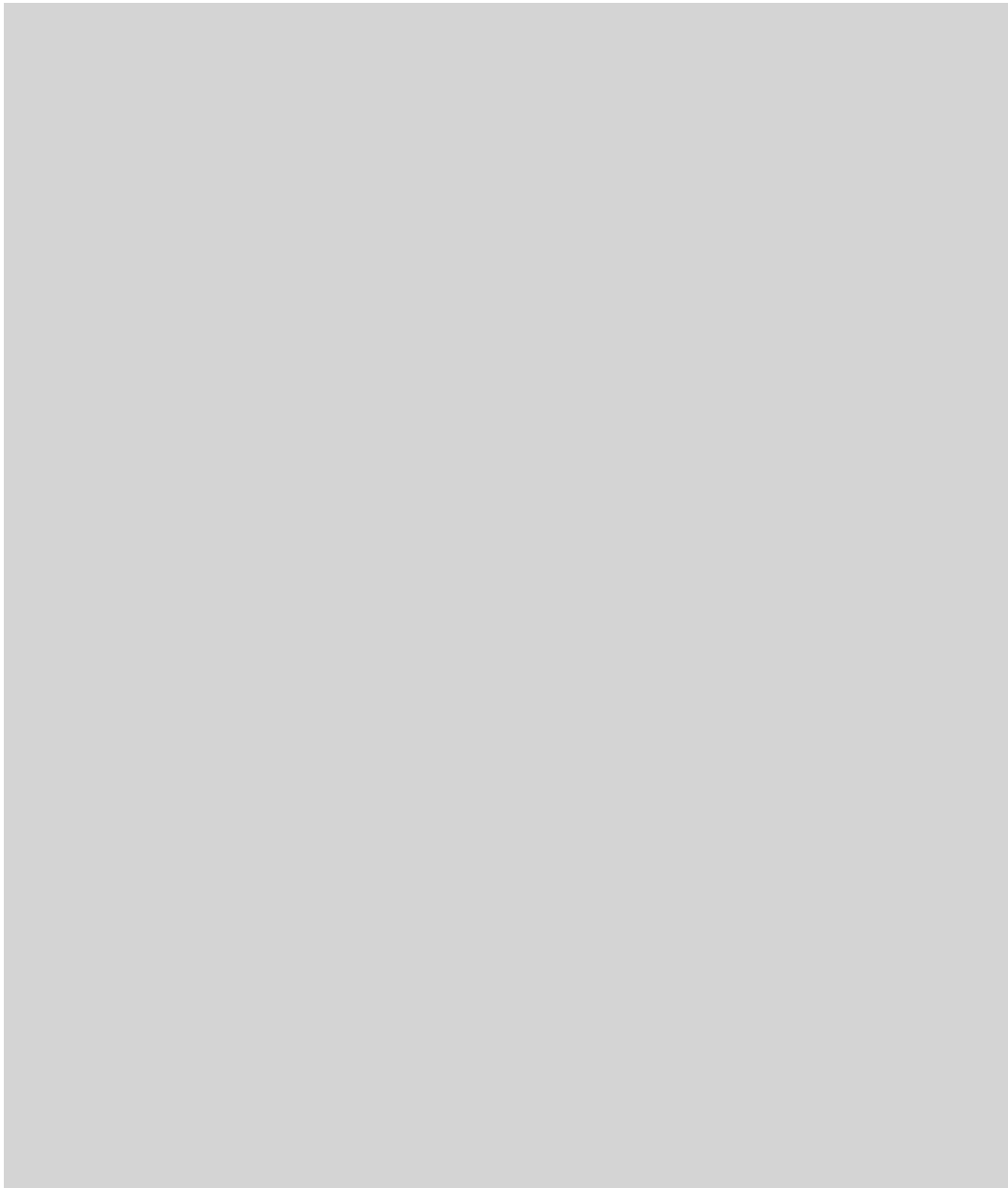
Dermstore

ElaMD UV Restore SPF 40

If you're looking for a sunscreen that doubles as anti-aging skin care, board-certified dermatologist [Dr. Sonia Badreshia-Bansal](#) recommended the [ElaMD UV Restore sunscreen](#). She said, "sunscreens that combine physical blockers with antioxidants like niacinamide, vitamin C, or DNA-repair enzymes" can help combat oxidative stress and visible signs of aging. This particular SPF has with squalane and ginger root extract, both of which support skin health and appearance.

\$46 AT DERMSTORE

\$46 AT AMAZON

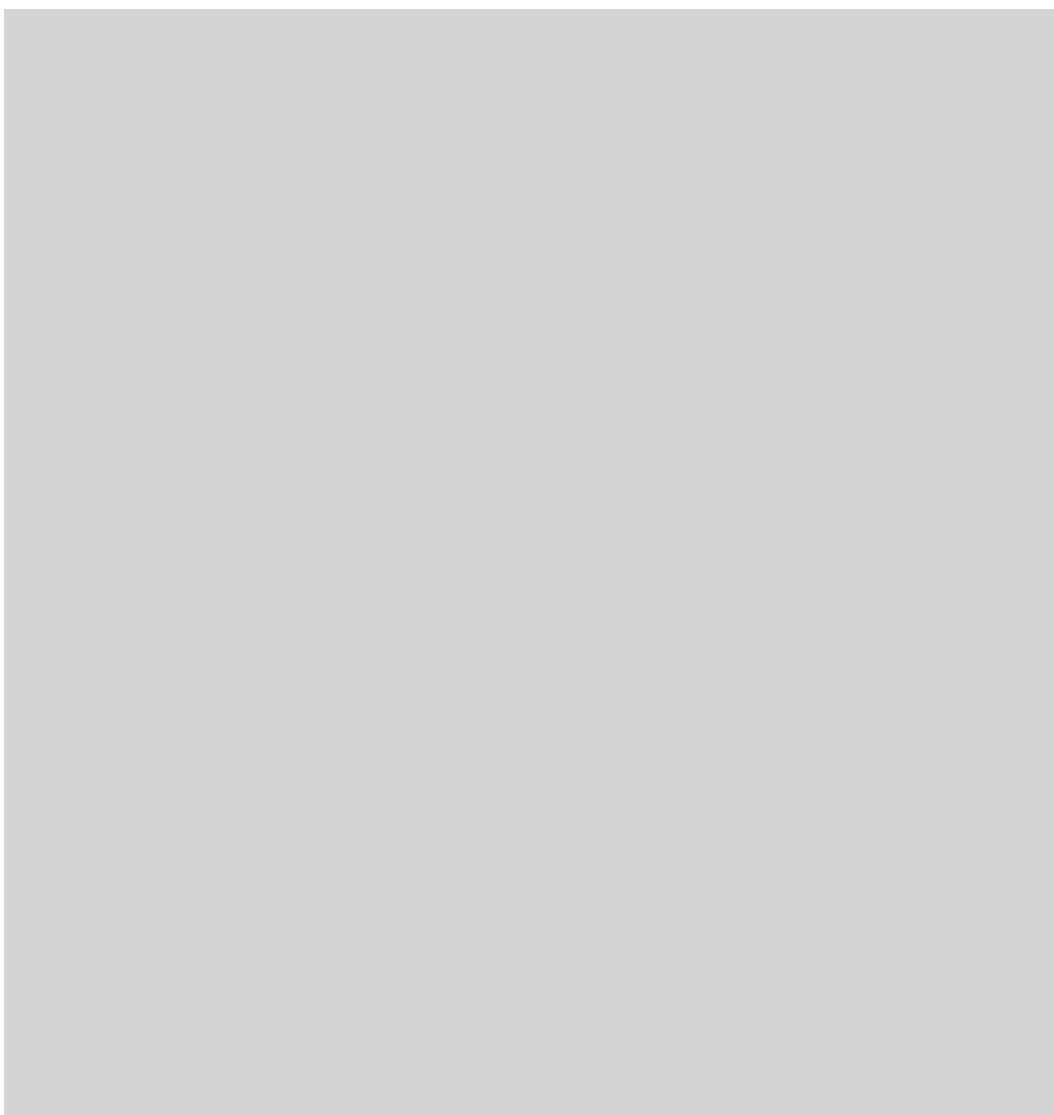


Sephora

Ultra Violette Future Screen SPF 50

The cult-fave Australian brand Ultra Violette is finally available in the US at [Sephora](#)! If anyone knows how to protect their skin from harmful rays, it's Southern Hemisphere-dwelling Australians. I stock up on their sunscreens and lip balms every time I'm Down Under, and this development is a real thrill for skin care lovers. Board-certified dermatologist [Dr. Jessie Cheung](#) of Chicago's Cheung Aesthetics & Wellness told HuffPost that [this must-have SPF](#) is “packed with mineral blockers to protect from the harsh Aussie sun, but feels silky and lightweight.”

\$40 AT SEPHORA



Amazon

L'Oreal Paris Bright Reveal Broad Spectrum Daily SPF 50

According to board-certified dermatologist [Dr. Alexander Witkowski](#), one of the most noteworthy new sunscreens of the season is this [SPF 50 fluid from L'Oreal](#). He told HuffPost that it has an innovative formula that "combines advanced sun protection with skin-brightening benefits." It's enriched with vitamin C and vitamin E, which can help "to reduce the appearance of dark spots and promote a more even, radiant complexion." He is also a fan of the lightweight finish that doesn't leave a white cast and the fact that it is formulated for sensitive skin.

\$25 AT AMAZON

\$33 AT ULTA

\$26 AT WALGREENS

Amazon

Isdin Eryfotona Actinica SPF 50+

Both Badreshia-Bansal and Cheung recommended [this Barcelona-based skin care brand's sunscreen](#). It is 100% mineral-based and infused with skin-loving ingredients that make it a great multitasker. It is one of the most comfortable mineral sunscreen formulas I've tried. It's formulated with zinc oxide, DNA repair enzymes and vitamin E — so not only is it preventing sun damage, but it's helping to nourish and repair the skin as well.

The Isdin sunscreen is significantly lighter and easier to blend than traditional mineral SPF's, and doesn't have that lingering zinc smell that personally drives me up the wall. It dries down to a soft matte and is a nice base for dewy makeup looks. While this sunscreen blends well, there is a very slight white cast that's typical of a mineral sunscreen formulation. The combination of lightweight finish, formula and UV protection has made it worth the troubleshooting. Many shoppers noted that it's great for anyone who has [sensitive skin, rosacea and skin cancer](#).

\$46 AT DERMSTORE

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Amazon

Neutrogena Sheer Zinc Oxide Dry-Touch mineral sunscreen SPF 50

When you're going to hit the beach or pool, water-resistant formulas are key. Badreshia-Bansal said, "Look for something labeled 'water resistant (80 minutes)' and at least SPF 50. I recommend mineral sticks or lotions because they tend to be more photostable." In [previous reporting](#), [Dr. Brandan Camp](#), a board-certified dermatologist at MDCS Dermatology, said, "This lightweight, non-greasy product provides SPF 50 protection and contains zinc oxide as the active ingredient," Camp said. It's specially formulated with antioxidants to be water-resistant, is naturally sourced and dries down quickly without leaving a greasy finish.

\$19 AT AMAZON

\$13 AT WALMART



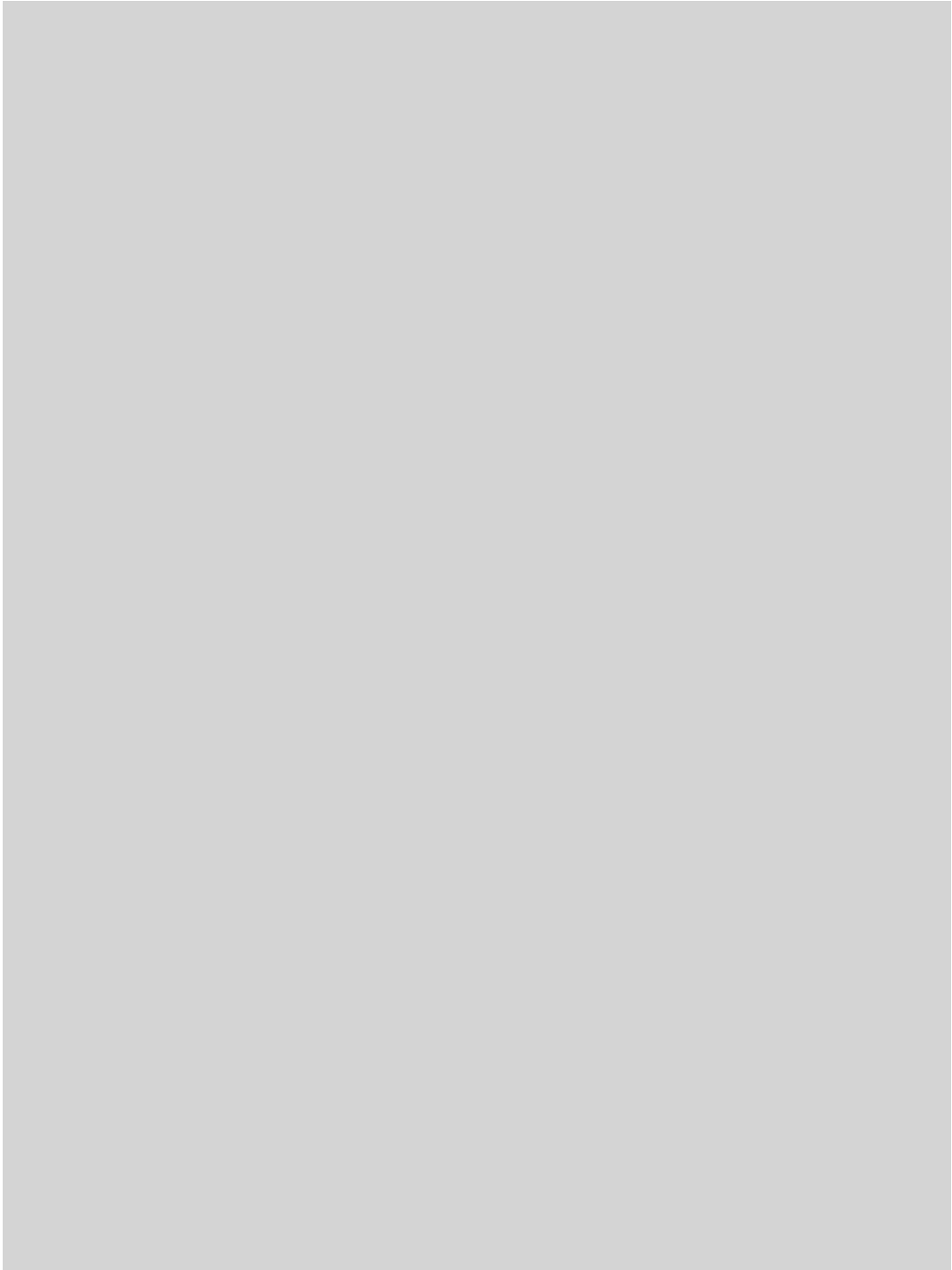
Elemis

Elemis Pro-Collagen SPF 50

[This silky sunscreen](#) is one of Elemis' newest products, but given how great it is, you'd think the brand has been in the SPF game for decades. I've been using it for a couple of weeks and absolutely love it. I'm extremely fussy about sunscreen texture, finish and scent — and luckily this beauty knocks it out of the ballpark on all counts while providing powerful SPF 50 protection. It's a sheer, imperceptible fluid that dries down quickly with no white cast and leaves your complexion looking radiant and dewy, never greasy. I can't help but add it to this list of must-haves that your skin will love.

\$70 AT ELEMIS

7



Dermstore

Eltamd UV AOX mist SPF 40

For beach days, Cheung recommends a water-resistant SPF, preferably a

mineral formula that won't cause your eyes to sting or slide off when you're sweating in the sun. She pointed out that the [EltaMD UV AOX Mist](#) is great for full body coverage, since it "sprays on white but dries clear, so you won't miss any spots. It also has 360-degree sprayability, so you can apply it upside down."

\$46 AT DERMSTORE

\$46 AT AMAZON



Ulta

La Roche-Posay Anthelios tinted light fluid sunscreen SPF 50

Badreshia-Bansal said, "I'm really impressed by the new [La Roche-Posay Anthelios mineral tinted SPF 50+ Fluid](#) – it's sheer, has a universal tint, and offers high UVA/UVB protection with 100% mineral filters. It's ideal for sensitive skin and has a great, elegant feel." Perfect for those days when you don't want to wear makeup want an easy pick-me-up.

\$40 AT ULTA

\$40 AT AMAZON



Amazon

CeraVe AM Facial Moisturizing Lotion with SPF 30

According to Witkowski, this [CeraVe lotion with SPF 30](#) is "an excellent, affordable and widely accessible option for a daily morning routine." It provides sun protection while doubling as a moisturizer and is formulated with ceramides, hyaluronic acid and niacinamide to support skin barrier health and hydration while also soothing irritation.. He also pointed out that it's non-comedogenic and fragrance-free, making it appropriate for sensitive and acne-prone skin.

\$15 AT AMAZON

\$16 AT ULTA

\$15 AT TARGET

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Ulta

Blue Lizard Sensitive mineral sunscreen SPF 50+

Another Badreshia-Bansal recommendation for days spent outdoors, this [reef-safe mineral sunscreen from Australia](#) contains no active chemicals and is suitable for use on sensitive skin. It's also sweat- and water-resistant for up to 80 minutes so you can enjoy all types of outdoor activities without worry.

\$13 AT ULTA

\$12 AT CVS

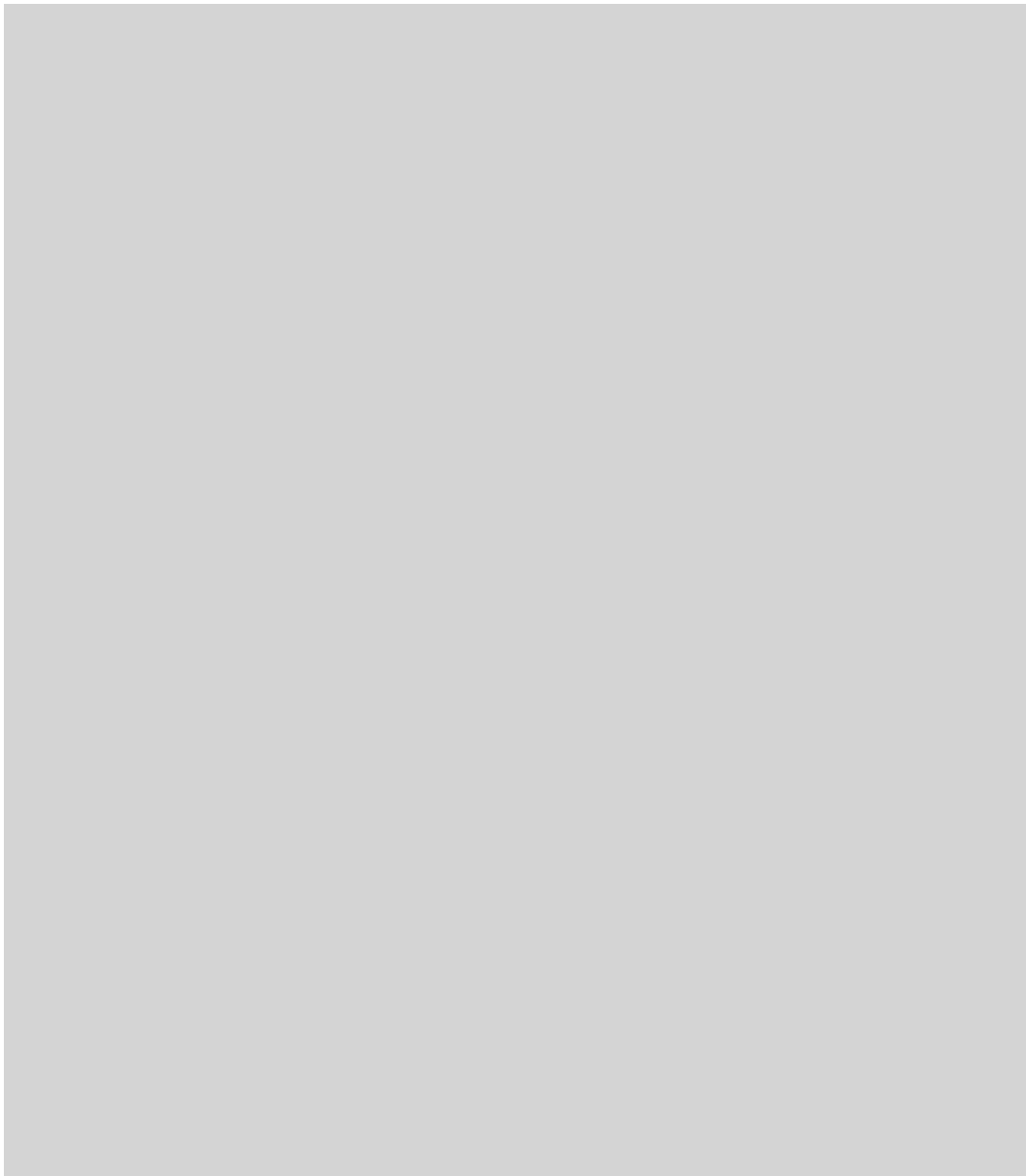


Merit

Merit The Uniform tinted mineral SPF 45

[This sunscreen](#) from the internet- and celeb-beloved beauty brand Merit is hot off the presses, and promises to be a lovely choice for those who want a sunscreen option that also offers a soft splash of color. It features a formulation that's designed to be lightweight and buildable with a silky, soft and velvety sheer finish to impart a natural glow, while also helping to smooth and blur the look of skin. It's available in 15 blendable hues. Be one of the first to check out this SPF.

\$38 AT MERIT



Amazon

La Roche-Posay Anthelios Clear Skin Sunscreen Dry Touch SPF 60

Having earned The Skin Cancer Foundation's Seal of Recommendation, this [La Roche-Posay](#) is Witkowski's personal favorite and “go-to” sunscreen, both for daily use and for days with extended sun exposure. It's also what he uses on his four-year-old child on beach days, bike rides or hikes. He noted that this oil-free SPF is very popular among dermatologists and is formulated with antioxidants that can help protect the skin from environmental damage. He also noted that it contains senna alata, “a tropical leaf extract known for its ability to combat oxidative stress and support the prevention of premature skin aging.” You can't go wrong with this non-comedogenic, water-resistant formula that is also well-suited for sensitive skin.



\$20+ AT AMAZON

\$20 AT ULTA

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13



Dermstore

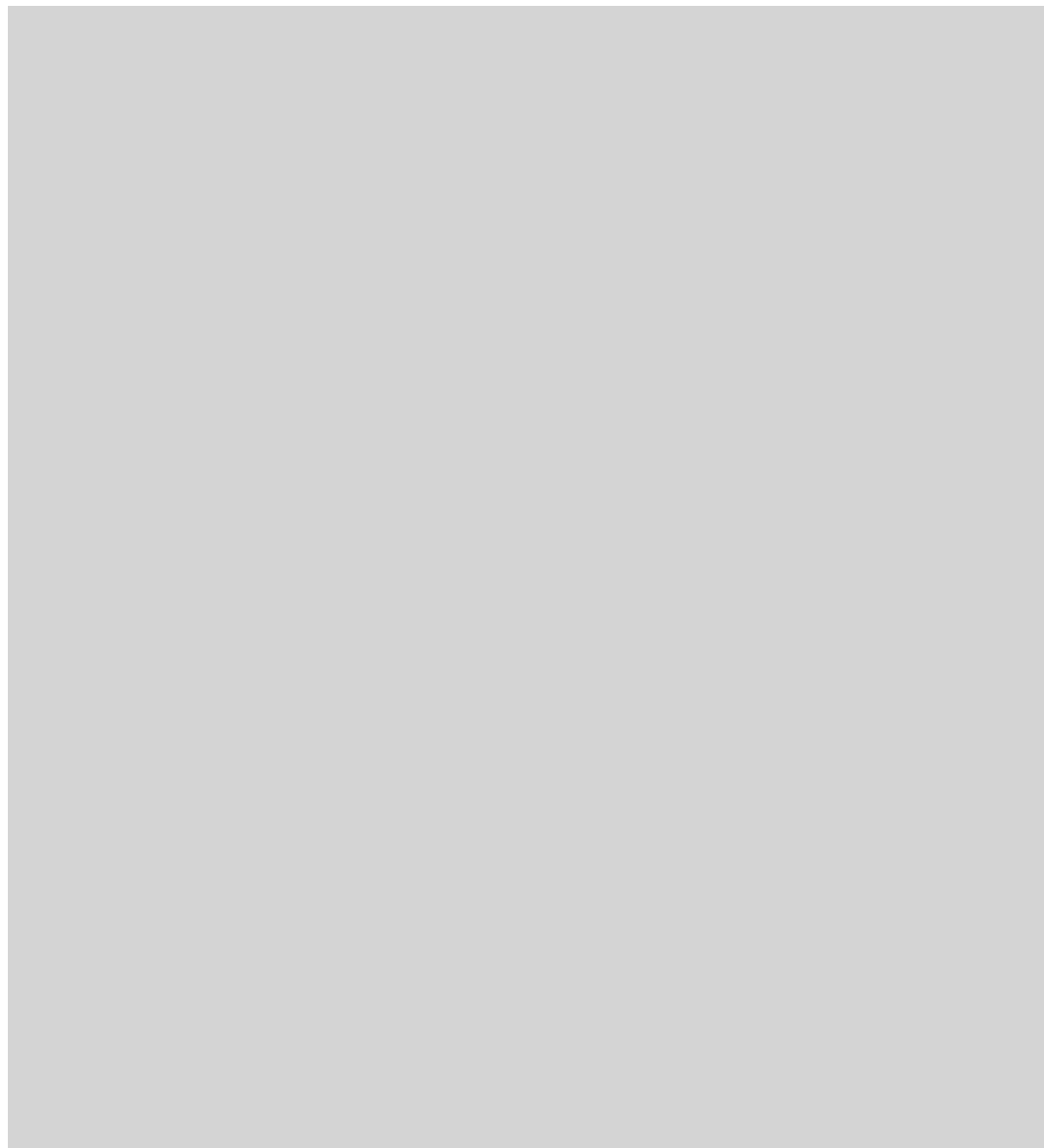
EltaMD UV Clear SPF 46

Badreshia-Bansal echoed the saying that "the best SPF for daily use is one that you'll actually wear — lightweight, invisible and comfortable under

makeup." She recommends a mineral SPF with low irritation potential, like [this cult-fave SPF](#) that is beloved by both HuffPost readers and editors alike. It's formulated with hyaluronic acid to deeply moisturize skin while the inclusion of lactic acid lightly exfoliates skin and can help to reduce hyperpigmentation and shine. It's a great option for people like me with sensitive and acne-prone skin. I turn to it anytime I'm going to be spending a lot of time in the sun or when I'm post-procedure and want to protect my skin without irritating it.

\$44 AT DERMSTORE

\$44 AT AMAZON



TiZO2 facial sunscreen and primer

"I recommend [Tizo 2 Facial Mineral Sunscreen SPF 40](#) for individuals seeking both high-performance sun protection and anti-aging benefits," said Witkowski. It's enriched with powerful antioxidants that can help neutralize free radicals and support overall skin health, while the gentle formulation makes it well-suited for sensitive and post-procedure skin. He also pointed out that it has a matte finish that "wears comfortably under makeup."

\$45 AT AMAZON

\$25 AT TARGET (REGULARLY \$45)

Dermstore

Lancer mineral Sun Shield universal tint SPF 30

Cheung recommends a lightweight, tinted mineral SPF with antioxidants for everyday wear, like the [Lancer Mineral Sun Shield SPF](#). "It multitasks as sun protection, skincare and a glow-up in one," she said. The iron oxides that provide the tint can also help to protect your skin from blue light, which penetrates deeper than UVB and contributes to hyperpigmentation. She added that this sunscreen "soothes while protecting and reducing sun damage, and will blend into all skin tones."

\$60 AT DERMSTORE

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