

SURFRIDER FOUNDATION ASSERTS ITS POSITION ON SUNSCREENS

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Whether they have chemical or mineral filters, we know that sunscreens can have an impact on ecosystems, particularly coral, as well as on our health. Faced with the increase in the number of sunscreens sold in Europe and the many questions raised about their use, Surfrider Foundation has decided to tackle these issues.

Suncream: a growing cause for concern

Prolonged unprotected exposure to the sun can lead to sunburn, accelerated skin ageing and even burns and skin cancer.

In order to limit these risks, the use of sunscreen products has become essential in summer, and in all seasons. There is now a very wide range of products available in the form of creams, lotions, sprays, sticks, gels, oils, etc.

However, the impact of sunscreens on the aquatic environment and human health has been the subject of growing concern for several years now, both among scientists and within civil society. Indeed, certain creams can have devastating effects on marine fauna, and in particular coral reefs, but also on health due to certain ingredients that compose them.

Facts and figures

- $\frac{1}{4}$ of the sunscreen product spread on the skin is diluted in water within 20 minutes.
- Every year, 25,000 tonnes of sunscreen products are discharged into the aquatic environment worldwide.
- The impact of sunscreens on aquatic environments has been the subject of growing concern for several years. Sunscreens contribute to a lot of pollution and stresses that directly affect the aquatic and marine environment.
- Impacts have been observed on many aquatic species. They can be direct or indirect, and they can concern the metabolism, physiology or behaviour of the surrounding fauna:
 - Direct : On reproduction, growth, mortality of species...
 - Indirect : The disappearance of founder species will have an impact on the biodiversity that depends on them.
- In Europe, sunscreens are considered **as cosmetic products**. Thus, they must comply with several criteria and tests concerning the SPF (Sun Protection Factor), water resistance, or the Broad Spectrum (the extent of protection), all of which allow to frame the claims on the packaging of sunscreens.

As part of its Healthy Waters campaign to improve water quality for all Europeans and to fight against water pollution, Surfrider Foundation has been looking into the impacts of sunscreen products. Here are our recommendations to reduce pollution from sunscreens while protecting your health. Although it is difficult to design products that have no impact, it is essential to apply the precautionary principle, to continue scientific research into these impacts and to rule out UV filters that have been shown to be harmful to the environment and health. Here are our recommendations to reduce pollution from sunscreens while protecting your health:

NO cream protects the Ocean

Label or no label, all sunscreens have an impact on the ocean, and NONE of them "PROTECT" it.

[Link to our full positioning](#)

Numerous scientific studies have demonstrated a link between UV filters, both chemical and mineral, and the damage caused to flora and fauna, coupled with risks to human health.

Suncreams contribute to a host of pollutants - chemical, bacteriological, waste, excess nutrients, sediments - and major stresses that have an impact on biodiversity and water quality, and further endanger vulnerable and fragile natural resources such as aquatic areas and the ocean. The presence of sunscreen in significant concentrations in the marine environment appears to be the cause of bioaccumulation in certain species.

From a health point of view, a number of studies have demonstrated the impact of certain chemical or mineral filters, which are accused of being endocrine disruptors, causing allergic reactions and being carcinogenic or even mutagenic.

What Surfrider recommends to citizens

Defending the concept of "one health" (one environment, one health), Surfrider recommends :

- **Favouring the purchase of sunscreens labelled with recognised environmental labels and excluding the most controversial UV filters and ingredients to date, namely:**
 - benzophenone-3
 - l'octocrylene
 - l'homosalate
 - L'octinoxate
- **As recommended by the World Health Organization:**
 - Avoid exposure between 12 p.m. and 4 p.m.
 - Wear loose-fitting, light clothing, including clothes intended for use in the water, as well as sun accessories such as parasols, hats and sunglasses.
 - Choose the morning or the end of the day for water-based activities.

What Surfrider is asking to decision-makers

- **Ban the sale and use of sunscreens containing the controversial substances** benzophenone-3, octocrylene, homosalate and octinoxate.
- **Ban so-called "eternal" chemical substances** from sunscreen product formulations.
- **Prohibit the dissemination of misleading or deceptive environmental and health claims** and strictly supervise the use of labels.
- **Make sunscreen product labels more transparent** and easier to read for consumers.
- **Applying the precautionary principle**, continuing scientific research into the environmental and health impacts of sunscreens and ruling out UV filters that have been shown to be harmful to the environment and health.

What Surfrider is asking manufacturers to do

- **Remove from their formulations chemical ingredients whose harmlessness to health and the environment**, in particular corals, has not been proven.
- **Stop the use of non-independently controlled labels and vague, simplistic, unclear, unsubstantiated, and uncontrolled environmental and health claims** on sunscreen products, and any communication that may mislead consumers or lead them to believe that a product has no impact on the ocean or the environment.

[Link to our full positioning](#)

As scientific knowledge becomes available, Surfrider Foundation reserves the right to change its position and will keep its community informed.

We remain at the disposal of journalists for any requests for information or interviews.

About Surfrider Foundation Europe

The NGO Surfrider Foundation is a group of positive activists who take concrete action on the ground every day to pass on a preserved ocean to future generations. Our mission: to make the voice of the ocean heard loud and clear! Our weapons? Raising awareness and mobilising citizens, children and adults alike (thanks in particular to 48 volunteer branches throughout Europe), using our scientific expertise to lobby and transform companies. Find out more about the association at <https://surfrider.eu/en> or via [this video](#)

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