

What to look for in a sunscreen for dark skin

There's a reason sunscreen is advised to be used daily, come rain, come sunshine. Make that plenty of reasons: dark spots and scars getting darker, acne worsening, and skin cancer are just some of the ways sun damage affects dark skin. This makes protection against harmful UVA and UVB rays important not just for appearance, but also for your well-being.

To make sure you're getting the best sunscreen for your skin type, there are a few sunscreen criteria to look out for:

- **A broad-spectrum formula:** It's important to look out for sunscreen that offers broad-spectrum protection against the sun's rays. This simply means that your sunscreen is able to protect you against the dangerous tag team of UVA and UVB sun rays.
- **SPF 30 or higher:** When selecting our sunscreen, look for products with SPF (sun protection factor) 30 or higher. That's how much solar energy is required to cause sunburn on protected skin compared with unprotected skin. An SPF 30 sunscreen filters about 97% of the sun's rays when applied correctly. Even on cloudy days, 80% of harmful rays still reach your skin.
- **Chemical or mineral:** Sunscreens are commonly available in chemical or mineral form. Distinguishing between both forms is easy—mineral sunscreens make use of minerals such as zinc oxide and titanium dioxide, while chemical sunscreens use these active ingredients:
 - Oxybenzone
 - Avobenzone
 - Octisalate
 - Octocrylene
 - Homosalate
 - Octinoxate

Chemicals allow easy application to the skin and are less likely to produce a white cast. However, there are concerns about the effects of long-term exposure to these chemicals, both on human and on aquatic life.

More research is needed to determine the long-term effects of chemical absorption in the bloodstream.

In the meantime, the only ingredients recognized as safe and effective by the Food and Drug Administration are zinc oxide and titanium dioxide, which are found in mineral sunscreens. Mineral sunscreens are great for people with sensitive skin. Mineral sunscreen is more difficult to apply (it can take a while to rub in) and is usually responsible for that telltale white cast.

What type of sunscreen is good for Black people?

Aesthetically speaking: Invisible protection that won't burn your eyes, makes you look greasy, or chalky.

Clinically speaking, hyaluronic acid, niacinamide, zinc oxide, and iron oxide are the top 4 ingredients Black people most benefit from in sunscreen.

Hyaluronic acid pulls moisture up from your deeper skin layers and your surroundings, and Niacinamide helps stop dark spots from getting darker.

Zinc is the ingredient that casts a white hue and makes folk look ashen. The products on our vetted list contain "micronized" zinc (think: pre-sifted flour vs. coarse flour) to break up the white cast.

Some products on our list have added iron oxide (tints to counterbalance the white cast):

- **Fenty Skin Hydra Vizor** (Huez tinted version)
- **EltaMD UV Clear** (Tinted version)
- **Tatcha The Silk Sunscreen**
- **SuperGoop Protec**(tint)
- **Buttah Skin Invisible Tinted Mineral**
- **Neutrogena Invisible Daily Defense** (Mineral version)

Tips for Sun Safety

Beyond sunscreen, there are other ways to protect your skin when you're out in the sun. They include:

- Wearing a hat
- Selecting protective clothing
- Wearing sunglasses
- Staying covered in shade outdoors.

[Healthline/health/beauty-skin/best sunscreens for dark skin](https://www.healthline.com/health/beauty-skin/best-sunscreens-for-dark-skin)

A comparison of the best sunscreens for dark skin

PRODUCT	TYPE	SPF	SKIN IT'S BEST FOR	KEY INGREDIENTS	PRICE
Black Girl Sunscreen	Chemical	30	melanin-rich skin	Avocado, Jojoba, Cacao	\$\$
EltaMD UV Clear Facial Sunscreen	Hybrid	46	acne-prone skin	Niacinamide, Hyaluronic acid	\$\$\$
CeraVe Hydrating Mineral Sunscreen	Mineral	50	sensitive/dry skin	Ceramides, Hyaluronic acid	\$\$
Fenty Beauty Hydra Vizor	Chemical	30	prone to hyperpigmentation	Niacinamide, Kalahari Melon	\$\$\$
Neutrogena Invisible Daily Defense	Chemical	60	in and out of the water	Feverfew, Vitamin E	\$\$
La Roche-Posay Anthelios Melt-In Milk	Chemical	100	actively sweating	Vitamin E, Panthenol	\$\$\$
Buttah Skin Invisible Tinted Mineral	Mineral	30	melanin-rich skin	Shea Butter, Vitamin E	\$\$
Kosas DreamBeam	Mineral	40	dull/dry skin	Peptides, Hyaluronic acid	\$\$\$
Tatcha The Silk Sunscreen	Mineral	50	with makeup	Silk extract, Niacinamide	\$\$\$
SuperGoop Protec(tint) daily SPF	Chemical	50	evening skin tone	Ectoin, Hyaluronic	\$\$\$