

The Best Sunscreens for Babies and Kids, According to Dermatologists

| By Lori Keong and Dominique Pariso

Buying sunscreen for babies and children involves a little more care and caution, since kids have thinner, more fragile skin. Across the board, the dermatologists we spoke to recommend mineral sunscreens — ones containing physical sun-blockers such as zinc oxide or titanium dioxide — “because we know they offer the broadest protection against UVA and UVB sun rays and tend to be less irritating to the skin,” says Vikash Oza, director of pediatric dermatology at NYU Langone Health.

Thankfully, most sunscreens formulated for babies and children are mineral sunscreens that “physically block the sun,” as opposed to chemical sunscreens that “absorb into your skin,” according to Lindsey Bordone, an assistant professor of dermatology at the Columbia University Medical Center. She notes that mineral sunscreens are also less likely to contain a UV filter like oxybenzone, a common ingredient in chemical sunscreens that can disrupt your hormone balance and prove harmful to reefs and other undersea life.



It's also important to note that “babies under six-months old should be physically protected from the sun rather than using any form of sunscreen,” according to Dr. Joshua Zeichner. Dr. Heidi A. Waldorf, Associate Clinical Professor of Dermatology at Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, agrees, suggesting parents who want to bring children six months or younger outside “keep them in the shade, out of the heat, and put them in a hat and light loose sun-protective clothing.” As a good rule of thumb, only the hands and feet should be left uncovered, adds Dr. Hooman Khoarsani, chief of the Division of Dermatologic & Cosmetic Surgery of the Mount Sinai Health System. If your child is old enough to wear sunscreen, though, below are some kid-specific favorites recommended by the 15 dermatologists we spoke to (all of whom emphasized that reapplying every two hours, or right after a good swim or sweat, is just as important as applying).

Best overall sunscreen



\$33 for 3 at Amazon

\$11 at Walmart

Neutrogena Pure & Free Baby Mineral Sunscreen Broad Spectrum SPF50

Bordone generally recommends mineral sunscreens from bigger brands like Neutrogena and Aveeno because they've been around a long time and have been tested for efficacy. She and three others specifically suggested this Neutrogena one formulated for babies, which features a broad-spectrum SPF 50 shield against UVA and UVB rays, and is dermatologist-tested, water-resistant, and hypoallergenic.

In addition to acting as a physical shield against UVA and UVB sun rays, mineral sunscreens tend “to be less irritating to the skin,” says Oza. As a general rule, you should look for sunscreens that have SPF 40 or higher, and be generous when applying, adds Bordone. “The amount of sunscreen you need to get the SPF amount on the bottle is quite a lot.” Oza says there’s no need to really go higher than SPF 50 though, since there isn’t much added sun protection beyond that level.

Best sunscreen for sensitive skin



\$14 at Amazon

Aveeno Baby Continuous Protection Sensitive Skin Broad Spectrum SPF 50

Aveeno also makes a mineral lotion-sunscreen combo for babies that’s designed for sensitive skin and is water- and sweat-resistant. And although it’s formulated for little ones, “this is a great sunscreen for anyone with sensitive skin as it’s formulated with oat, which helps keep the skin moisturized,” explains Dr. Samer Jaber of NYC-based Washington Square Dermatology. It is also free of parabens, phthalates, and fragrance.

Best sunscreen for getting kids interested in sunscreen



\$26 at Amazon

\$25 at Buy Buy Baby

Blue Lizard Australian Sunscreen – Baby SPF 30 Plus

Blue Lizard Australian Sunscreen is another extremely popular option amongst the dermatologists we spoke to, in part because its bottle will turn pink when exposed to harmful UV rays, making it a super fun and easy way to get kids more interested in sun protection. Dr. Morgan Rabach loves that it is also paraben- and fragrance-free, so it won’t irritate skin. And, like all mineral sunscreen, this starts working immediately upon application, according to Dr. Carlos A. Charles, founder of NYC-based Derma di Colore.

Best sunscreen that doesn't leave a white cast



Photo:
Courtesy of
the Vendor

Replenix Ultra Sheer Sunscreen SPF 50 +

The only downside to using a mineral sunscreen is that many tend to leave a white cast on your skin. Bordone recommends Replenix's sunscreens to parents looking to avoid that cast. "It doesn't make you look so pasty," she says. This formula contains SPF 50 sun protection, added skin-boosting antioxidants, and comes in a family-sized bottle that's great if you've got more than one kid to slather up (or are planning to spend a lot of time in the sun the next few months).

\$40 at Dermstore

Best cruelty-free sunscreen



Photo:
Courtesy of
the Vendor

Badger Baby Broad Spectrum SPF 30 Sunscreen

\$12 | (was \$17, now 29% off)

For a certified cruelty free kids' sunscreen, Dr. Ainah Tan recommends Badger Baby, which she notes is "reef friendly and biodegradable." Debra Jaliman, an assistant professor of dermatology at Mount Sinai School of Medicine, also likes this 100-percent, certified-natural sunscreen because it's hypoallergenic, safe for sensitive skin, and tested by pediatricians.

\$12 at Amazon

Best tear-free sunscreen



Photo:
Courtesy of
the Vendor

Babyganics Mineral-Based Sunscreen Lotion SPF 50, Pack of 2

\$17 | (was \$18, now 6% off)

If you're worried about sunscreen irritating tiny eyes, Jaliman suggests this tear-free, zinc-oxide based formula from Babyganics, which she says is also free of fragrances and parabens. Plus, it's water-resistant for up to 80 minutes, making it a great option for kids who are old enough to splash around.

\$17 at Amazon

Best drugstore sunscreen



Coppertone Water and Babies Pure and Simple Broad Spectrum SPF 50 Sunscreen

Coppertone’s broad-spectrum SPF 50 baby sunscreen should be readily available at most drugstores, according to Jaliman, who prefers it over other inexpensive brands because it’s hypoallergenic, water-resistant, and tested by pediatricians and dermatologists.

\$8 at Amazon

Best stick sunscreens



Neutrogena Pure & Free Baby Mineral Sunscreen Stick

Stick sunscreens are ideal for applying to (often squirmy) children’s faces, because it’s less likely you’ll get the stuff in their eyes, according to Dr. Elizabeth Tanzi. She and two other experts — Dr. Jody Levine and Waldorf — specifically recommend this Neutrogena mineral-sunscreen stick. But if you do go with a stick, Dr. Keira Barr suggests “making at least four passes back and forth on the skin” to ensure you are getting full coverage.

\$8 at Amazon



Coola Mineral Sport SPF 50 Sunscreen Stick

\$21 | (was \$26, now 19% off)

Three of our experts also recommend this sunscreen stick from Coola. On top of being formulated with 20 percent zinc oxide, this all-natural mineral sunscreen also contains antioxidants such as Tamanu oil, avocado butter, and chamomile extract, which have anti-inflammatory and skin soothing properties. Plus, it has a “fragrance-free, non-greasy stick formula” and, as a stick, is “perfect for travel,” according to Dr. Michele S. Green.

\$26 at Lovely Skin

Best spray sunscreen



Supergoop! 100% Mineral Sunscreen Mist SPF 30

Dr. Marnie Nussbaum loves this mineral sunscreen mist because “the kids actually let me put it all over their body — it is super quick to spread.” Unlike most spray-on sunscreens, which are typically chemical blockers, this one is completely mineral-based, and is also non-aerosol.

[\\$34 at Amazon](#)

[\\$34 at Dermstore](#)

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