



Choose biodegradable sunscreen to save coral reefs

Are we loving our reefs to death? Florida biochemist says coral-killing synthetics harm humans, too

ORLANDO, Fla. (Feb. 11, 2008): If you care about coral reefs, choose your sunscreen wisely, Florida biochemist Celia Ferreira, Ph.D., advises.

Scientists have found a link between dying coral reefs and the estimated 4,000 to 6,000 tons of sunscreen that wash off swimmers every year.

According to a study published in the January 2008 issue of *Environmental Health Perspectives*, four common sunscreen ingredients activate viruses that kill an important symbiotic algae that feeds coral through photosynthesis. Without the algae, the coral turns white and dies.

Scientists at the Polytechnic University of Marche in Italy estimates 10 percent of coral reefs worldwide are threatened by sunscreen-induced bleaching.

The good news? “We don’t need to choose between protecting our skin and protecting coral reefs,” says Celia Ferreira, Ph.D., formulator of Caribbean Solutions sunscreen products in Orlando, Fla. “In my experience, sun products without petroleum derivatives actually protect the skin better.”

The four harmful chemicals include three sun blockers -- octinoxate, oxybenzone and 4-methylbenzylidene camphor -- and the preservative butylparaben.

According to the Environmental Working Group’s Skin Deep database (skindeep.ewg.org), the reef-damaging ingredients are also linked to cancer, allergic reactions, endocrine disruption, neurotoxicity and reproductive harm in humans.

What can an eco-conscious sun lover do? Ferreira, who grew up in Brazil and now lives in Florida, offers these tips:

- Choose a sunscreen with titanium dioxide and zinc oxide as active ingredients. These minerals scatter and reflect UVA and UVB rays, while petrochemicals absorb them.
- Read the label carefully – many “natural” brands contain the ingredients scientists say cause coral to bleach and die.

- Choose a biodegradable sunscreen whose ingredients break down in seawater.
- Beware of sunscreens that claim to be waterproof. “In chemistry there is one law: similar dissolves similar,” Dr. Ferreira notes. “Sixty percent of sunscreen is water. The truth is, when synthetic sunscreen comes in contact with water, it breaks down and washes away.”
- Apply sunscreen 30 minutes before exposure, and reapply every 45 minutes.
- Cover up with a hat or rash guard with an SPF rating.

Dr. Ferreira formulated Caribbean Solutions SolGuard (in SPF 4, 8, 15 and 25) with botanical ingredients, including wild pansy, green coffee bean extract and hibiscus. Titanium dioxide and zinc oxide protect from both UVA and UVB rays, while sunflower and cucumber oils soothe and hydrate the skin.

Caribbean Solutions products contain no parabens, artificial fragrance or mineral oil to make you break out.

Many cruise lines, resorts and marine preserves require guests to wear biodegradable sunscreen. Sold for years at resorts in Mexico, Florida and Hawaii and online at caribbean-sol.com, Caribbean Solutions launches nationwide this spring.

Suggested retail is \$14.99 for 6 ounces. To order, call 1-866-460-7363 or visit www.caribbean-sol.com.

EDS: For samples, images, copies of the study or interviews with Dr. Celia Ferreira or Caribbean Solutions President Bruce Shanks, contact Lisa Everitt at 303.475.3202 or lisaeveritt@comcast.net.