Eco-conscious Divers Need to Choose Their Sunscreens Wisely
By Autumn Blum, Formulator and CEO, Stream2Sea

We are divers. We can lose ourselves in underwater images, we are always dreaming about our next dive; and we are truly in love with our blue planet. We are conservationists, even if we wouldn’t necessarily call ourselves that. We know that we make decisions that impact us and the world around us every day. We would never consider releasing balloons at a party (a turtle could mistake them for food); we got rid of any body scrub with microbeads (those plastics have no place in our oceans); and we are learning to pay attention to which sunscreens we choose when playing in the waters.

Chemical sunscreens usually contain a combination of two or more active ingredients like oxybenzone, avobenzone, octylmethoxycinnamate and homosalate. Many of these ingredients bioaccumulate in the body and have credible, documented health concerns. They have also been shown to be hazardous to the environment. Four ingredients commonly found in sunscreens were recently shown to bleach or kill coral, even when presented in very small concentrations — so low, in fact, that they already exceed the levels commonly found in popular reef destinations!

My Sunscreen Is a Drop in the Bucket. It Can’t Possibly Make a Difference ... Or Can It?
I launched Stream2Sea after watching hundreds of snorkelers create an oil slick on top of a pristine coral reef. As a cosmetics chemist and NAUI Green Diver, I knew we could do better. I formulated Stream2Sea specifically to address the safety of humans as well as the safety of our sensitive aquatic environment. Before launching our line this past summer, we completed a series of tests, including biodegradability in fresh as well as salt water, and a range of studies showing we were nontoxic to freshwater fish, saltwater fish, C. elegans (roundworm), and coral larvae.

Could Using Stream2Sea Sunscreen Possibly Make a Difference?
You bet it can. “Any small effort to reduce oxybenzone pollution could mean that a coral reef survives a long, hot summer, or that a degraded area recovers,” says Dr. Craig Downs from Haereticus Research Labs, the leader of the recent study showing that these ingredients can cause coral bleaching. Not to negate
the other very real threats to our oceans like coastal pollution, climate change and overfishing, but informed divers and snorkelers can no longer believe they can’t make a difference. The study showed that miniscule concentrations — as low as 62 parts per trillion — damaged nearly half of the coral larva exposed to it in a lab setting, and researchers documented significantly higher concentrations in waters near reefs in Hawaii and the Virgin Islands. If you have a hard time visualizing that concentration, it’s roughly the equivalent of one drop of water in six Olympic-size swimming pools!

My goal is to encourage you to know what ingredients are in the products you are purchasing. The terminology “coral-reef safe” is not regulated, and is therefore meaningless, unless you thoroughly understand the ingredients. There are two types of sunscreens: chemical sunscreens that work by absorbing into your skin and absorbing the UV rays, and mineral sunscreens that work by sitting on top of your skin and reflecting the UV rays. Choose products that do not contain ingredients shown to cause harm: Avoid parabens, oxybenzone, methoxycinnamate and “clear” nano grades of sunscreens (you can tell because it typically says “clear” on the front of the label).

Choose eco-consciously. Together, we can do better!

— Autumn Blum, formulator and CEO, Stream2Sea: Home of the Eco-conscious Mineral Sunscreen

Stream2Sea has set a new standard for eco-conscious sunscreen and skincare. Along with required human safety and SPF tests, Stream2Sea products are proven to be biodegradable in both salt and fresh water, and have passed the most comprehensive series of aquatic-toxicity tests documented in literature. Formulated with powerful antioxidant blends to protect skin from sun damage, the Stream2Sea line includes sunscreens, conditioning shampoo and body wash, leave-in conditioner, nourishing body lotion and lip balms. Stream2Sea products are currently available online at stream2sea.com or ask for them at your favorite health-food store, dive shop or outdoor retailer. Like us on Facebook or call 866-960-9513.