

A NOTE ON SUNSCREEN

Sunscreen might help to protect your skin, but most are deadly to coral. When you go for a dip in the sea, some of your suntan lotion rinses off. And that's a big problem when it contains ingredients such as oxybenzone, octinoxate or parabens (which most sun lotions do), because harsh chemicals can kill coral and other marine life.

Up to 6,000 tons of sunscreen are estimated to wash into coral reefs around the globe each year. And as the National Park Service cautions, rather than being evenly distributed, much of that sunscreen is concentrated at popular diving, swimming, and snorkeling sites—such as national Parks like Piedras Blancas here in the Golfo Dulce.

We can all still make a difference. By putting our awareness into action, we can make different choices that lessen our impact on the ocean.

1. You've already taken the first step—becoming informed!
2. Choose mineral sunscreens, especially lotions containing non-nano zinc dioxide as the primary active ingredient.
3. Look for reef safe sunscreens which are becoming increasingly available.
4. Avoid aerosol sunscreen. Much of what you spray leaves a residue on the sand which is then washed back into the ocean. Your lungs will be healthier too, as aerosol sunscreens are easily inhaled.
5. If you can, apply less personal care products before you go swimming; the fewer chemicals you bring into the ocean, the better. Some ways to protect your skin from harmful UV radiation without lots of sunscreen while on tour with us could be to use protective clothing and a hat. Dermatologists say clothing is just as effective as sunscreen at protecting from the sun, with the only downside being it doesn't completely cover the body.



If we lose coral reefs, we will have lost a vital ecosystem. We could also hurt our global economy—coral reefs are a major tourist attraction and source of income for Costa Rica. Be a part of the solution!