

Cost Analysis of Sunscreens Targeted Towards Skin of Color

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ABSTRACT

Skin cancer most commonly affects fair-skinned individuals¹; however, it can appear in individuals of all skin tones. Photoprotective behaviors such as applying sunscreen should be practiced by all individuals regardless of skin tone. Herein, the authors discuss the cost and protection of popular sunscreens targeted towards patients with darker skin or skin of color (SOC), and suggest important considerations providers should take into account when advising about sunscreen recommendations for patients with skin of color.

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INTRODUCTION

Skin cancer is the most common cancer diagnosis and there are several preventative measures aimed at reducing its prevalence such as photoprotection.¹ Photoprotective behaviors help prevent sunburns, skin cancer, and skin damage. However, individuals with skin of color (SOC) are less likely to use sunscreen due to misconceptions regarding its benefits and patients' susceptibilities to skin cancer and sunburns.² Further, cosmetic elegance and cost have been described as deterrents for patients with darker skin when deciding to use sunscreen.³ Several studies have found that social media outlets and dermatologists recommend more expensive products to patients with SOC.⁴ This discussion aims to analyze the cost and SPF level of sunscreens marketed toward patients with darker skin.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Sunscreens were identified through a TikTok social media analysis following hashtags: "sunscreen for skin of color," and "sunscreen for dark skin." For each hashtag, the 10 most popular posts were selected, based on TikTok algorithms. Sixteen sunscreens were identified. Their price in U.S. Dollars, price per fluid ounce, and SPF were reported. Prices were obtained directly from the company's website for eleven out of sixteen sunscreens. For the remaining four sunscreens that could not be purchased directly from the company's website (CeraVe Hydrating Sunscreen Face Sheer Tint, EleVen Unrivaled Sun Serum, Mele No Shade Sunscreen Oil, and Neutrogena Purescreen Mineral UV Tint, and Biore UV Aqua Rich), the price was obtained from online retailers such as Target, Amazon, Credo Beauty, and Walmart. The lowest price available from an online retailer was used for these four sunscreens.

TABLE 1.

Price and SPF for popular sunscreens targeted towards skin of color

| Sunscreen | Price (USD) | Price Per Fluid Ounce (USD/Fl Oz) | SPF |
|---|-------------|-----------------------------------|-----|
| "Beauty of Joeseon Relief Sun: Rice + Probiotics" | \$18.00 | \$10.65 | 50 |
| Biore UV Aqua Rich | \$15.99 | \$9.41 | 30 |
| "Biossance Sheer Mineral Sunscreen" | \$32.00 | \$18.82 | 30 |
| Black Girl Sunscreen | \$18.99 | \$6.33 | 30 |
| "CeraVe Hydrating Sunscreen Face Sheer Tint" | \$13.99 | \$8.23 | 30 |
| Coola Mineral Sun Silk Stick | \$26.00 | \$43.00 | 50 |
| Dr. Dennis Gross Spot Sun Defense | \$42.00 | \$24.70 | 30 |
| "Dr. V InZincable SPF 50 Sunblock" | \$34.00 | \$20.00 | 50 |
| "EltaMD UV Clear Tinted Sunscreen" | \$45.00 | \$26.47 | 46 |
| "La Roche-Posay Anthelios Tinted Mineral Sunscreen" | \$37.99 | \$22.35 | 50 |
| Mele No Shade Sunscreen Oil | \$16.99 | \$16.99 | 30 |
| "Neutrogena Purescreen Mineral UV Tint" | \$17.19 | \$15.63 | 30 |
| Shishedo Stick | \$32.00 | \$45.71 | 50 |
| "Supergoop Unseen Sunscreen" | \$38.00 | \$22.35 | 40 |

DISCUSSION

The average cost of sunscreens targeted toward patients with SOC was \$31.20 (\$24.92/fl oz), Prices ranged from \$13.99 to \$45.00 as highlighted in Table 1. SPF levels ranged from 30 to 50 which aligns with the AAD's recommendation to use sunscreen with an SPF of 30 or greater.⁴ In comparison, one recent study found that the average cost of sunscreen targeted towards lighter skin tones was \$11.32/fl oz.⁴ This indicates that sunscreens targeted toward patients with skin of color appeared on average to be more expensive.⁴ Although many of the sunscreens marketed toward individuals with darker skin are created by smaller businesses leading to higher prices, there need to be more affordable options to encourage photoprotection.

CONCLUSION

Awareness regarding photoprotection in patients with skin of color is increasing. The rise of dermatology in social media outlets, public awareness, and education regarding photoprotection has encouraged sunscreen usage. However, when counseling on photoprotection in individuals with skin of color, it is important to consider barriers to adherence such as cost. Sunscreen manufacturers have historically focused less on creating products for individuals with skin of color. As larger businesses expand their products, the average cost of sunscreen options for patients with skin of color will hopefully decrease. As awareness of this topic increases and new products are developed, providers should stay up to date on sunscreen options available to patients with skin of color.

DISCLOSURES

The authors have no conflicts of interest to disclose.

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