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Research finds breakthrough in barrier reef UV filters for sunscreens



By Michelle Yeomans+

30-Jul-2013

Last updated on 31-Jul-2013 at 12:42 GMT

Related tags: [Barrier reef corals](#), [Sunscreen](#), [Cosmetics](#)

Australia's national science agency, CSIRO has teamed up with skincare brand Larissa Bright to create the world's first UVA/UVB sunscreen filters that mimic the natural protection corals on the Great Barrier Reef emit under the sun's rays.

The breakthrough comes after scientists spent the last two years adapting the coral's sunscreen code so that it can be safely used as an ingredient in human sunscreen and has since been given the go ahead to create a collection of 48 new sunscreen filters.

The joint venture is now said to pave the way for a new generation of sunscreens which harness the same protective barriers as those developed by Australia's Great Barrier Reef corals over millions of years in order to survive in the harsh weather conditions.

According to the company director Larissa Bright, the new UV filters are resistant to both UVA and UVB rays and are clear and colorless, which means they can be used in any cream emulsion.

"We wanted to find a way to convert this natural method of coping with exposure to the intensive UV rays from Queensland's sunshine, into a safe and effective sunscreen for human use," she explains.

"We feel these filters will set a new standard in broad spectrum sunscreen. They mimic the natural sunscreen coral has developed and used over millions of years," she adds.

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Set to revolutionize UV protection

The research builds on work by scientists at the Australian Institute of Marine Science (AIMS) who were the first to discover the natural sun screening ability of coral on the Great Barrier Reef.

Larissa Bright Australia, in partnership with AIMS, studied the results of over 20 years of AIMS research into how shallow-water corals protect themselves from UV light before approaching CSIRO.

According to CSIRO research scientist Dr Mark York, who led the research project in conjunction with senior research scientist Dr Jack Ryan, *"The molecular make up of the coral's natural sunscreen filter was quite complex, but the real challenge was modifying it so that it was resistant to both UVA and UVB radiation in one molecule which is what makes these filters so unique."*

The broad spectrum coral sunscreen filters are expected to be available to consumers across the globe within five years.

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