

A Review of SolRx Waterblock Sunscreen

By Bill Welzien

Short Review

I am a long distance endurance swimmer. My venue is the island of Key West. As of this writing, I have completed 85 complete swims around the island, the distance being 12.5 miles. My goal is to complete 100 swims by the end of 2017.

As you may imagine, the sun here in the lower Florida Keys is intense. My swims begin as the sun is coming up and take me into the early- to mid-afternoon. To apply a typical store-bought sunblock is fruitless, as they wash off in one to two hours. My swims around Key West take me anywhere from 6 to 7 hours, depending on conditions. Once I start, there is no possibility of reapplying anything to my wet skin.

My solution to my skin protection had been maximum strength zinc oxide (40% zinc). This is a complete sunblock that works without fail. The problem is that it is messy. It stains swimsuits, it should be applied with a disposable glove and it is a tedious job to clean off skin. To remove it, you must use vegetable oil or baby oil and a half roll of paper towels.

Recently, I was introduced to SolRx sunscreen. It is made by SOLRX GLOBAL, INC. in Atlanta, Ga. The website for this company is www.solrx.com. The product that I used in my last two swims around Key West was SolRx Waterblock Sunscreen SPF 44 Dry Zinc. According to their website, the product is supposed to provide protection for 8 hours. It claims to be a broad spectrum UVA/UVB Defense. The label states the active ingredients are: Octocrylene 10.0%, Octinoxate 7.5% and Zinc 15%. It applies clear. It stays on your skin until you wash it off with soap and water.

Is Octocrylene safe? This is what I found on the web: "Octocrylene has been evaluated by the FDA and is considered safe for use up to 10% in the formula. The European Union has allows its use up to 10% in a formula, and Health Canada allows a maximum use level of 12%." It supposedly makes the product more water resistant than titanium dioxide and makes the product more expensive, so many companies shy away from it.

What about Octinoxate? Here is what I found: "Although octinoxate has been approved for use by the FDA in sunscreens and products that help reduce the appearance of scars, the concentration must be no higher than 7.5% for the product to be considered safe."

My main concern is not burning in the intense sun of the Keys. In the two swims I used the SolRx, I did not burn. I did not spend 45 minutes trying to dissolve the 40% zinc oxide with mineral oil and paper towels. I did not look like the Pillsbury Dough Boy entering and exiting the water. I did not stain my suit or leave white stains on my car doors and seat. I went home and washed it off with soap and water. For me, all this was very freeing!

I would suggest a visit to the company's website for more information. I noticed that there are some good prices on Amazon.com.

If you are an endurance athlete, fisherman, anyone who spends extended time in the hot sun and want to avoid burning, I would recommend this product.

In addition to my personal swims, I am also the organizer of the Annual Swim Around Key West (12.5 miles) swimaroundkeywest.com. I will make my experience with SolRx known to all our solo swimmers as an option to using the max strength 40% zinc oxide that I have encouraged in the past.

Detailed Review

I am a swimmer. I am a long distance swimmer. As of this writing, I have completed 85 career swims around the island of Key West. To cover the distance of 12.5 miles, it takes me anywhere between 6 and 7 hours. The tides and conditions play a big factor in my finish times.

The sun here in the Florida Keys is intense. The summer water temperature can easily reach 90 degrees by August. Key West is the Southernmost City in the continental USA. We are located 150 miles south of Miami and 90 miles north of Havana, Cuba.

Often I am asked if I fear sharks. Actually, no! My great fears are inattentive motor boaters and jet skiers. To solve this problem, I always have a kayak next to me with a trusted kayaker. This person is my protection! My next fear is sunburn.

We know how uncomfortable a sunburn is. It certainly can ruin a vacation. A serious sunburn can land you in the burn care unit of the local hospital. Then there is the risk of skin cancer. Swimming these waters for any period of time demands a serious sunblock!

You might think, just get a good sunblock. There are so many to choose from, right? Indeed, a good sunblock is the answer. The problem is that most sunblocks will last only 80 minutes in the water. Even if you found one that would last 3 hours, that would be inadequate if you are committed to a 6- to 7-hour distance swim. There is no way you can reapply such a sunblock to your wet skin. As I do my swims, I am not allowed to stand up, exit the water or hold on to anything. So there is no getting in a boat and drying off to reapply a product. That means whatever you apply at the start must suffice the full duration of the swim.

Over the years I have used a variety of products. I used zinc oxide ointment with 20% zinc. I found this ineffective, as I would still burn to a degree. Next I moved to maximum strength zinc oxide. Desitin is an example of a max strength zinc product. It is found in the baby section of the supermarket or pharmacy. It is used for diaper rash. The cost is about \$16 to \$20 per pound. Maximum strength products are 40% zinc.

I can testify that maximum strength is a full sunblock. If it is applied thickly, you will not burn. That is the great positive; however, there are numerous negatives to this product.

- 1) It is best to have it applied TO you, and that person had better have on a disposable latex or vinyl gloves. This is a most messy product.
- 2) Desitin has the awful smell of fish oil. Boudreaux's Butt Paste is max strength and has a lavender smell. It comes in tubes and is much more expensive than Desitin. Burt's Bees Baby Bee Diaper Ointment is also 40% zinc and comes in a smell-free 3 oz. tube that will run you \$8 to \$10. All of these will keep you from burning.
- 3) These products stain fabric. I would not recommend using these products with your favorite swimsuit. There is a way to remove the zinc stain, but it is an involved process that requires you to soak your suit in water with white vinegar and then oxi stain remover. You can find the formula to remove the stain on the Johnson & Johnson website.
- 4) After my swim, everything I rubbed against was covered with the white zinc. My car has trace amounts on the doors and bumpers where I touched a leg or arm.

- 5) Maximum zinc is a bear to get off your skin. I have tried rubbing alcohol: no good. I find vegetable oil, baby oil or mineral oil the best to break down and dissolve the zinc. Then you begin to rub with a paper towel. This is a tedious process that can take 30 to 40 minutes to clean off your body. The problem then is you are all greasy, so you need to shower with soap a couple of times in hot water to try to get the grease off. My hair also needed to be washed several times because I place the zinc on the balding area of my head. If I came home with zinc on my body, my wife would let out a groan as I walked in as she knew she was expected to assist me with the project.

I was so excited to swim my double cross of the width of the Sea of Galilee in September 2015. The reason was that I began at 9:30 p.m. and would swim through the night. I felt so free to not have the zinc oxide applied to my body. It was just me, my suit and my goggles!

Until this past November (2016), I was unaware of a product that would replace the max strength zinc. It was through another swimmer, Craig Dunbar from Richmond, Va., that I learned about SolRx. He had contacted me to assist him with choosing a day and time to swim Key West with the most favorable tides. I asked him what he was prepared to use for skin protection. He mentioned this product. He detected my skepticism, and since he figured I was the expert, he said he would also purchase some max strength zinc.

After we spoke, I was curious about this product that, according to Craig, claimed to provide protection from the sun for 8 hours. I went to solrx.com and read every word written there. I then fired an email to Kerry Koop, an employee for the company. I told her who I was, what I accomplished and what I was hoping to do. In addition to my then 83 completed swims, I told her I organized the Annual Swim Around Key West. I added that I always used max strength zinc and recommend it to my fellow solo swimmers. I asked for a complementary tube of product and stated that if this product worked, I would be her company's greatest cheerleader.

The 3-oz. tube of SolRx Waterblock Sunscreen SPF Dry Zinc arrived in the mailbox on Saturday, November 12. I planned to swim that Monday. With my daughter Abigail as my trusty kayaker, we headed to the beach and the start point. I admit to being a bit nervous to be foregoing the max strength zinc that I know works. It went on easy enough. No need for the throw away gloves. No stains on my suit. It applies clear. I used about half the tube.

As I exited the water, I noticed I didn't receive the strange stares typically expressed by a beach goer wondering about this white creature emerging from the water onto the beach. I just looked, well, normal!

We got the kayak on the van hood and left. No stains on my bumper or my seat. When I got home, I simply took a shower with soap, no need for cooking or baby oil and paper towels. I dried off and took a 45-minute nap. That was time I would have been wiping the zinc off! I thought, "This is easy. I could get used to this!"

That very Wednesday, November 16, I was back at the beach to attempt swim #85. This time, Nora Jones was my kayaker. I had about a half tube left. I thought I might have to use some zinc as I was

unsure if I could get enough out of the tube for a second swim. But, no, one tube served me for two 6+ hour swims. My experience was similar to Monday's swim. No burn. No stains. Easy wash-off.

My bottom line: SolRx has the positive of the maximum strength zinc oxide (40%) (e.g. total sunblock), but none of the many negatives.

I have a plan to continue my swims around the Island of Key West. My goal is to complete my final 15 by the end of 2017. I will take the winter off and hope to begin doing Island swims again in March or early April of the new year. At this point, I also plan to use SolRx in each of those swims. This seems to me to be the easiest and wisest solution to my skin protection concerns!