



- [Home](#)
- [Features](#)
- [Beauty 101](#)
- [In The News](#)
- [Buyer's Guide](#)
- [Formulary](#)
- [New Products](#)
- [Columns](#)
- [Supplier's Corner](#)
- [Ad Index](#)
- [Special Advertising](#)
- [Webinars](#)
- [White Papers](#)
- [Blog](#)
- [My HAPPY](#)
- [Contact HBA](#)
- [Schedules](#)
- [Contact Advertising](#)
- [Private Label Directory](#)
- [Resource Streamline](#)
- [Website Showcase](#)
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Feature

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Photo: LaRoche-Posay

Seeing The Light

There are plenty of PSAs and UV-blocking technologies these days, but do consumers really understand that application of broad-spectrum protection needs to be a daily pursuit?

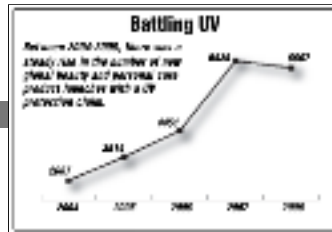
Christine Esposito
Associate Editor

Labor Day Weekend, the unofficial end to summer in the U.S., has passed. Vacations at the beach, pool or lake are over. Consumers have packed away the swimsuits and most likely tossed aside their bottles of sunscreen, too. Even diligent sunscreen wearers are slacking off a bit—as if turning the page on the calendar decreases the harmful effects of the sun.

It doesn't. The sun never takes a break. Come September, consumers may be exposing less skin overall to sunlight, but they remain in the dark when it comes to the importance of daily protection. Faces, arms and hands are still exposed to the sun's rays year-round, regardless of the season. And it is everyday UV exposure that adds up, say industry experts.

"Everyday sun exposure builds up and can increase your risk of developing skin cancer, not to mention wrinkles and other signs of premature aging," said Catherine Lair, director of marketing for Eucerin at Beiersdorf, Inc. "Even on a cloudy day, 80% of the sun's rays still reach your skin, so sun protection needs to go beyond the beach and be incorporated into your daily skin care routine. Many people don't realize that little things like walking your dog, driving in your car, window shopping and similar activities can cause sun damage."

Dr. Amy J. Derick, a dermatologist based in Barrington, IL, echoed that sentiment.



Source: Mintel Global New Products Database

"We are exposed to UV radiation every time we step outside, and it penetrates through window glass. In the U.S., most people have increased sun damage on the left side of the face—the driving side. This is from daily incident UV light exposure. Even cloudy days and cooler weather can pose risk of harmful UV exposure."

Many experts contend consumers are much more knowledgeable about sun exposure facts like these.

"In general, over the last decade, the general public has gained a better understanding about the potential harm of UV damage. They are starting to appreciate that message thanks to various public health campaigns," said Dr. Steven Q. Wang, member of the Skin Cancer Foundation's photobiology committee and director of dermatology surgery and dermatology at Memorial Sloan Kettering in Basking Ridge, NJ.

Add to that a steady influx of products boasting UV protection claims (see chart below), and one would think that Americans are a pretty sun-savvy bunch.

But why then is skin cancer the most common form of cancer in the U.S., with more than one million skin cancers diagnosed annually? And why are there more new cases of skin cancer each year than the combined incidence of cancers of the breast, prostate, lung and colon?

It's the difference between knowing and doing.

"In terms of taking that message and practicing it, we still have more work to do. Knowledge does not always translate to proper behavior," noted Dr. Wang, who will speak at the Florida Chapter of the Society of Cosmetics Chemists Sunscreen Symposium this month.

Statistics from a study released by Neutrogena in mid-June confirm that behavior, as 80% of adults agreed that sun exposure can be deadly, but only 27% reported using at least 1oz. of sunscreen (the dermatologist's recommendation). Further-more, a whopping 70% of adults reported getting sunburned at least once a year.

According to Dr. Wang, the vast majority of consumers understand that massive UV radiation is bad for their health, "but they forget or they prefer to tan," he said, pointing to the perception that tan skin connotes health and an active lifestyle—a far cry from the Victorian Era, when pale skin was in vogue.

"Consumers in the U.S. still love to tan," added Janice Lee, senior marketing manager with Kinerase, a skin care line owned by Valeant Pharmaceuticals.



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New Weapons

Knowing that consumers continue to seek out the sun (or seemingly "forget" about it), companies continue to roll out new skin care products with broad spectrum UV protection. And since firms making products for the U.S. market are still limited to a select number of UV filters approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), product development has been squarely focused on improving aesthetics and adding more naturally derived ingredients.

LaRoche-Posay's Anthelios 60 with Cell-OX-Shield delivers UVA and UVB protection.



"All companies are relegated to play with similar toys in the same sandbox regarding sun filter ingredient options as indicated by the FDA monograph, said Gene Colon, assistant vice president, medical and media relations for La Roche-Posay, a brand with a rich heritage in sun protection.

The L'Oréal unit recently rolled out Anthelios 60 with Cell-OX-Shield, a sunscreen range that offers dual protection with a patented combination of high-efficacy sun filters and powerful antioxidants. According to LaRoche-Posay, this line delivers broad-spectrum protection (SPF 60/PFA 28) against UVA and UVB rays via avobenzene (3%) and octocrylene (5%) while a unique photostabilizing booster enhances photostability with maintained UVA and UVB protection even after five hours. In addition, Cell-OX-Shield's antioxidant combination includes senna alata, a tropical leaf extract with a self-defense mechanism to protect against cell damage that works in combination with an additional antioxidant that helps protect skin from environmental aggressors.

In addition to its ingredient-rich formulation, Anthelios 60 Cell-OX Shield is offered in a trio of textures (ultra light fluid; melt-in milk and melt-in lotion), which the company contends will help increase the likelihood consumers will wear it.

"You need to actually apply the sunscreen to benefit from its protective qualities. Sounds obvious, but you would be surprised at how many consumers don't use sunscreen because they don't like the way it feels,"

said Mr. Colon.

Skin care companies and sun protection advocates alike continue to push the message about UV protection as an integral part of a daily skin care regimen.

"Consumers are becoming more educated about the need to protect their skin, but there are certainly opportunities to continue to inform them about the importance of everyday sun protection," said Ms. Lair of Eucerin, which offers consumers Everyday Protection Body Lotion SPF 15 and Face Lotion SPF 30, both of which combat the sun's harmful rays while moisturizing the skin.

"Wearing sunscreen should be a part of a person's daily routine, agreed Dr. Derick, who pointed to rising melanoma rates in young women as a cause for concern. "This is why programs like Play Safe in the Sun are so important," she said, referring to her work with the Women's Dermatologic Society (WDS) program which educates outdoor enthusiasts about the importance of sun safety. Play Safe in the Sun offers skin cancer screenings, sun safety education and free sunscreen at large outdoor sporting events, such as the LPGA Solheim Cup and the Ping Junior Solheim Cup golf events this past summer.

Hands-on marketing efforts can help drive the message home, but so can the use of sophisticated tools such as UV photography. For instance, Eucerin offered attendees at the recent BlogHer '09 conference in Chicago the chance to see their skin in the Beiersdorf "Time Machine" Aging Simulator. By doing so, many of the top female bloggers were able to visualize the aging process and see how their lifestyles today will effect their skin tomorrow—and hopefully they will start spreading the word about UV protection.

Get 'Em While They're Young

This "picture-is-worth-a-1000-words" tactic may turn out to have the biggest impact on today's youth. Researchers from Boston University School of Medicine and the Children's Melanoma Prevention Foundation collaborated on an intervention program with middle school students in which all students received a sun protection lecture. The intervention group also received a UV photograph of their face that showed pigment changes from chronic sun exposure along with detailed explanations of their findings.

According to the researchers, less than 36% reported sunburns in the intervention group at the two-month follow-up, as compared with the control group (57%). Students generally reported that the UV photograph was a helpful tool in teaching risk factors for skin cancer, according to the findings, which were published in the April 2009 issue of the Journal of the Dermatology Nurses' Association.

Kinase is addressing UV-related damage with new PhotoFacials line.



Efforts to educate and empower children are critical when it comes to increased compliance. While parents may be vigilant about protection during the summer, there is still plenty of room for improvement.

According to the BabyCenter Summer Safety Survey released this July with Neutrogena, 36% of moms let their children go outdoors without sunscreen, and only 45% of moms only apply sunscreen on their children when they will be outdoors for more than 30 minutes.

Experts have come to recognize that the sun protection message needs to be reinforced outside the home if there is to be sea change in habits here in the U.S.

"Sun safety education starts at home and children can be educated about sun safety but if it is not demonstrated in the home there will be little behavioral change," said Tamika J. Peay, executive director of Richard David Kann (RDK) Melanoma Foundation, the West Palm Beach, FL organization which has created SunSmart America, a K-12th grade curriculum that can be used

in physical education, health, science and English classes.

The RDK Foundation is well aware that education is only part of the equation. A recently completed study done in collaboration with the University of Miami's Department of Dermatology found that students using the SunSmart America K-12 curriculum over a three-year period showed an increase in sun safety knowledge—but very little change in sun safety behavior.

"We concluded that other environmental factors play a major role in changing students behavior as it relates to sun safety," Ms. Peay said, insisting that parents—as well as school officials—should also practice sun safety behavior.

The Skin Cancer Foundation has taken a similar approach by creating the Sensational Guide to Smart Sun Safety/Fun in the Sun 101 program. Made possible by a grant from Eucerin, the program is comprised of in-school and online educational tools designed to engage, excite and encourage children to take the necessary steps toward a sun-safe lifestyle.

"It is very important to change attitudes at an early age," said Dr. Wang. "You need to develop healthy behaviors before children reach the teenage years. They will be less susceptible to peer pressure. They can understand the risk, and there will be fewer competing messages."

What Lies Beneath

For older consumers, however, tanning is a hard habit to kick. Who doesn't enjoy a day at the beach or a round of golf—and the little bit of summer sun that goes along with it? Plus, those small doses of UV have physiological benefits and are essential in the production of vitamin D.

But as autumn sets in, people begin to recognize that their skin has paid the price.

"Although consumers are aware that the sun causes wrinkles and hyperpigmentation, they still love the healthy-looking, sun-kissed glow that only the sun gives them. But then at the end of the summer, they're trying to 'fix' the damage done to their skin," said Ms. Lee of Kinerase.

To that end, Kinerase recently launched the PhotoFacials Sun Damage Reversal System, an at-home topical skin care system that replicates the benefits of a photofacial—a leading in-office procedure. The first step, a Daily Exfoliating Cleanser, is formulated with Superfruit Enzyme Complex (starfruit, passionfruit, kiwi, mangosteen, pineapple, pomegranate, lychee, Indian jujube and guava extracts) which exfoliates and primes skin for the next two steps.

The Day Moisturizer features zinc oxide and titanium dioxide as well as a complex of lactic and kojic acids and mulberry, bearberry and licorice extracts that act as a hydroquinone lightening alternative, exfoliating the skin to benefit penetration of key ingredients. In addition, the formulation includes beta-glucan, which stimulates collagen production and kinetin, a nature-identical plant cytokinin clinically proven to help the skin to retain moisture through the night and reduce the appearance of fine lines and wrinkles without irritation. The third leg is the Night Moisturizer, which restores the skin's lipid barrier and increases cell renewal overnight with potent antioxidants and a patent-pending ingredient that conquers hyperpigmentation from multiple angles.

According to Ms. Lee, this regimen works synergistically to stop, correct and protect from the signs of sun damage in as little as four weeks. "The technologies we've included inhibit melanin production with multiple lighteners such as kojic acid, SepiWhite MSH and SepiCalm VG, protect the skin with zinc oxide and titanium dioxide—physical sunscreens that are ideal for sensitive skin because they are less irritating and bounce UV rays off the skin like a mirror—and improve skin elasticity with Matrixyl 3000, and reduce overall signs of aging with the highest level of kinetin in the Kinerase line," she said.

Garnier has also been attacking damage that lies beneath the surface with its Nutritioniste Skin Renew line. In January, it rolled out Skin Renew Anti Sun Damage Eye Cream SPF 15, which was the first mass market eye cream recommended by the Skin Cancer Foundation. In clinical studies, after eight weeks, signs of sub-surface UV damage were reduced, according to Garnier, and 83% of women showed a significant decrease in the length and width of UV spots.

What's Next

Moving forward, the UV protection market will be challenged by increased calls for products to protect skin as well as those that vow to repair past damage—all from consumers who recognize the dangers, but continue to expose themselves to UV rays with little or no protection.

"In the coming years, I think that new products will continue to address this dichotomy, and the consumer's mindset on this topic will continue to evolve," said Ms. Lee.

What will also impact UV protection in skin care is FDA's proposed monograph.

"Finalization of the FDA monograph is imminent to help clarify UVA testing methodologies and consumer communication points. In addition, there are several new sun filters currently not available in the U.S. that are also pending approval with the FDA," said Mr. Colon. "While we don't know the ETA of these initiatives, these changes/additions will certainly further enhance the battle against UV damage and increase public awareness and consumer understanding."

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