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Keeping Your Skin Healthy

By Kim Palmer

Summer is finally here and it's time to hit the beaches (and parks)! July and August bring hot, sun-filled days, which means a lot of tanning on the beach, lounging by the pool, playing in the park, and, well, pretty much anything else you can do outdoors. But all this outdoor activity involves a lot of exposure to the sun, and with all of the dangers of sunburn and UV rays, it's important to protect yourself and your kids with the right sunscreen.

The world of skincare products can be confusing, what with a whole shelf lined with bottles and tubes, in what seems to be some sort of secret code, involving SPF, UVB and UVA, and a ton of chemicals you can't pronounce. It comes in all forms now too; you can go for the basic lotion or the unique spray can, and there are those meant for swimming and those meant for sweating.

So how about all those letters? Well, to start, UVA and UVB are both ultraviolet rays, but have different effects. UVB rays cause that nasty sunburn, but also, in safe amounts, help your body produce Vitamin D, which helps in calcium absorption, immunity, insulin secretion and blood pressure. However, an overexposure or prolonged exposure to UVB rays can effect the health of the skin, eye and immune system; the most severe result being malignant melanoma, better known as skin cancer. UVA rays do not cause visible damage, but can cause DNA damage, which can also contribute to melanoma. SPF, which stands for Sun Protection Factor, is a measure of the UVB protection. In other words, if you put on SPF 30, it should allow you to remain in the sun 30 times longer than without it before burning. Not all sunscreens provide UVA protection.

So how do you choose? Focus on what's most important in a sunscreen: ingredients not likely to cause allergic reaction, a good blend of SPF and UVA protection, no additives, such as vitamin A, E or botanicals, and something that feels and smells good on your skin.

One sunscreen line that fits the bill is MDSolarSciences, run by physicians, primarily focused on skin cancer prevention. Using an expert medical team, the company has created a line of

sunscreen without any potentially dangerous or irritating chemicals, insuring safe and pleasant sun protection.

MDSS' line of sunscreens comes in gel, lotion, body spray and sport stick forms, assuring you the application of your preference, for every situation. Using a stabilizing system, the No Touch Body Spray is free of unsafe chemicals, dries quickly and does not use propellants that can be harmful to the environment. Most importantly, it offers high SPF and UVA/UVB protection.

For those of you with acne or rosacea-prone skin, you may find that many sunscreens irritate or cause breakouts. The mineral lotion and gel screens from MDSS are water resistant and non-comedogenic, so they won't clog pores, and work great for teens and adults with the aforementioned skin problems. The mineral gel contains pure zinc oxide and titanium dioxide, keeping them smooth and non-irritating to skin. They are especially good for those looking to cover sensitive areas, such as a bald or closely-shaven head. With a light and silky feel and moisture balanced compounds, these sunscreens will keep your skin soft and prevent the drying affects of heat and sun.

If you're an athlete or an avid runner/cyclist, you are very familiar with the unfortunate sunburn that inevitably sneaks its way in when you're sweating and out in the sun for hours on end. For this, MDSS provides their Ultra Sports Stick, a hybrid mineral/organic-based sunscreen that is highly water- and sweat-resistant. And on top of that it also comes in a pocket-sized dispenser for when you're on the run (literally!).

All of the sunscreens provide broad spectrum UVA and UVB protection that not only conform to U.S. F.D.A. standards, but Europe's (higher) criteria as well.

When you spend all day out in the sun, you may need more than just sunscreen to truly protect you, especially between the hours of 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., when the most dangerous UVA/UVB rays are present. MDSS has a solution for that as well. They have put out a line of UV protective clothing and eyewear, to cover and protect you in a way sunscreen can't. To prevent the heavy, uncomfortable feel of protective clothing, MDSS uses natural fibers, including a cotton/bamboo blend, which reduce the weight and increase the breathability, allowing for a comfortable feel that isn't reminiscent of wearing a potato sack.

SoSciOptiX, MDSS' brand of eyewear, is UV400 screened, protecting against macular degeneration - leading to blindness - and UV penetration. The brand offers both sunglasses and ski goggles, to protect you from the beach to the mountains.

And if that's not enough, MDSS also packages a Sol ALERT personal UV detector with their sunscreens that allows you to measure UV exposure through a color-changing warning system, indicating a "time to sunburn," which comes as both a wristband and a UV card.

In addition to all this, the company puts out environmentally-safe products, preventing harm to marine life, and they donate a percentage of their profits to medical schools and institutions that conduct research on skin cancer.

The products are available through physicians' offices or online at www.mdsolarciences.com. MD SolarSciences has its headquarters at 128 East Avenue, Norwalk CT 06851. For further information call 203-857-0095 or visit www.mdsolarciences.com.