

Finding your way through the sunscreen jungle

In a recent column we discussed the healing properties of the sun and how the energy in the sun's rays literally charge the brain and also help to produce vital vitamin D when hitting the skin.

Now as we know, too much of a good thing can be harmful and most people know enough to protect themselves using sunscreen. This is a double edged sword however for several reasons and with an ocean of products out there, it's important to know what to think about and what to look for.

1. Giving the sun's healing qualities we should spend time on a daily basis *without* sunscreen. This should happen at the beginning at the day before, 9 or 10 am and at the end of the day, after 4 pm.
2. Use an effective and safe sun screen without toxic chemicals for you and your family.
3. As an alternative to covering your body with sunscreen you can use UV protective clothing and apply sunscreen only to exposed skin.

When choosing a sun screen for you and your family, there are some noteworthy facts to consider; the FDA does set any criteria or additional requirements for sunscreen and body care products that are marketed to children. Kids have a lower tolerance to chemicals and their developing bodies are more sensitive to toxins. Many skin care products, including sunscreen have harmful ingredients that can disrupt the body's own chemistry and it is therefore important to choose with care!

Two ingredients commonly found in sunscreen are Oxybenzone and Retinyl palmitate.

Oxybenzone is an active ingredient in sunscreen that will enter the bloodstream and act as an estrogen (the unnatural kind or zeno estrogen). This chemical has been linked to endometriosis in women and lower birthweight in newborn girls.

Retinyl palmitate is a form of vitamin A that on sun exposed skin may speed up development of skin tumors and lesions according to government studies. (You'd think the FDA would raise their eyebrows and prevent the use of this ingredient given their own studies...!!!)

Instead, choose sun care products that contain Zinc oxide and Titanium dioxide that tend to be stable in sun light, have a good balance of UVA and UVB protection and do not often contain harmful additives.

High SPF, or Sun Protection Factor should also be avoided. SPF only relates to the UVB rays that burn the skin and not to UVA rays which penetrate deep into the skin where they cause damage; accelerating aging of the skin, suppressing the immune system and can cause cancer of the skin. The higher the SPF, the greater the false sense of security. Using a lower SPF and staying out of the sun in the middle of the day is a better choice.

There is a great organization that very much is concerned with our internal as well as external environment; the Environmental Working Group (www.ewg.org) and their website has an extensive list of sunscreens, as well as other body care products, bug sprays, cleaning products etc that meet their strict criteria. You can even down load their app so you have it at your fingertips while shopping in stores! You can also check the products you are already using to make sure that you and your family are not unknowingly rubbing toxic chemicals into you blood stream!

As much as we want to believe that the FDA keeps us safe, the truth of the matter is that the standard for safety is very low and the cosmetic industry is highly unregulated. Much of our wellness relies on us being informed consumers. We are so far behind in this country when it comes to safety standards so beware, do your due diligence and don't take the government's word (or silence) for it!

"If you don't take care of your body, then where are you going to live?"

Cheers,

The SHS Wellness committee