

No Scare Skin Care

By Deborah Farrell, R.N.

Ed. Note: Do you remember when one of the “perks” of working at the beach was a “free tan”? The goal of many lifeguards was getting their skin as dark as possible. As the incidents of skin disfigurement and melanoma deaths grow, proper protection against sun damage has become an essential part of lifeguarding. The following is a contribution from Deborah Farrell, R.N. in skin care. She is also the mother of four surfers, three of whom are junior lifeguards.

Today, I see so many active, trim and health-conscious people living life to the fullest. Bike lanes and beaches are full of sun-tanned bodies who may never see the effects of heart or lung disease because sadly, skin cancer will claim them first. It's true that 1.3 million new cases of skin cancer will be reported this year alone. More women will die in their 20's and 30's from skin cancer than from breast cancer. In southern California, we enjoy sunny weather year-round and need to develop healthy, skin protection habits to keep from adding to the grim statistics. Knowing which sunblock to apply and applying it often enough can protect us from developing skin cancer and premature aging of the skin.

“Broad spectrum” is a term that is supposed to mean UVB and UVA protection. The UVA rays are divided into short and long wavelengths. Dermatologists have proven that to avoid skin cancer, hyper-pigmentation and premature aging of the skin, we need to filter out the longest portion of the UVA rays. Not all ingredients do this and lifeguards, as professionals working in virtually unavoidable sun should learn to choose the ingredients that filter out the entire UVA wavelengths.

Avo benzone is a physical block that filters from 350-390 nanometers. If it is combined with a chemical UVB screen, you won't burn and you'll avoid the risk of developing cancer. However, if you're sensitive and sometimes get irritated skin from the chemicals, you won't use these products as often as you should, which is every day!

Zinc Oxide, on the other hand, protects against all the sun's UVB rays and the short and long UVA rays. Today you can find transparent zinc called “Z-cote” which is available in many brands such as Skinceuticals, Epicicuren and Sun Smart by Applied Therapeutics. These products are non-allergenic, non-irritating and dermatologists-recommended. In the San Diego area, they are available from the offices of Dr. Carol Hollan in La Jolla, phone 858-450-0440.

This clinic treats all sun-related conditions and makes available the various zinc z-cote formulations that are appropriate for most skin types. These products are also beginning to appear at surf shops and other beach related outlets.

I strongly recommend the following 7 habits of Highly Health Conscious People:

1. **WEAR PROPER CLOTHING** – Wide brimmed hats, tight-knitted fabrics and UVA protective sun glasses.
2. **AVOID DIRECT EXPOSURE** - When possible, during the 10 am to 2 pm time.
3. **USE PLENTY OF HIGH SPF OR ZINC SUNBLOCK** - Apply 1 oz. per application.
4. **RE-APPLY EVERY TWO HOURS** - Or, after swimming or excessive perspiration....or when you're making lots of rescues, use “water resistant” sun blocks.
5. **BE SURE TO COVER EARS, NOSE, LIPS, SHOULDERS, AND FEET.**
6. **REMEMBER SAND, SNOW AND WATER REFLECT UV RAYS** – So, protect more often in these settings.
7. **AVOID TANNING BEDS** - If you must have a “tan” use tanning lotions. They usually include some protection and often look better also.

One of the great advantages of the new, clear zinc products is that you don't end up with either the "white nose" of yesteryear or the "warpaint" look of those hideous colored zinc coats. Another option is the Andra Fina line of products from Carlsbad, CA, phone 760-438-1599. Check out the SunSmart website www.atfosyou.com.