

## **THE WALL STREET JOURNAL.** ONLINE

### **New Sunscreens Promise Advances in Protection**

*By Rhonda L. Rundle, The Wall Street Journal, 804 words*

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HELP IS COMING for sun worshippers seeking better protection to slow aging of their skin.

Several new products coming on the market are touted as major leaps forward in the battle against the sun. Neutrogena Corp. is launching a new line of sunblock products that dermatologists say don't need to be reapplied every couple of hours like rival sunscreens. A pill made from a Central American plant that reduces sun damage to the skin is showing up in drugstores nationwide. And the maker of a four-year-old laundry additive that blocks ultraviolet radiation is repositioning it with a grass-roots marketing campaign.

Dermatologists say there hasn't been a significant new active sunscreen agent launched in the U.S. in more than 20 years. But French cosmetics maker L'Oreal says it is in discussions with the Food and Drug Administration about winning approval for a potent sun filter called Meroxyl, which L'Oreal has sold outside the U.S. for years but isn't legal here. Some physicians are optimistic that the FDA will approve it next year.

Neutrogena's new products are based on a technology it has developed, dubbed Helioplex, which makes a commonly used chemical agent work more effectively. Existing sunscreens that contain Parsol 1789, or Avobenzone, do a good job of blocking ultraviolet-B rays, but their protection against ultraviolet-A rays starts to weaken after a few hours of sun exposure.

"We have found a way to stop Avobenzone from degrading and boost its UV protection ability" so that the product "retains its exceptionally high potency even in four to five hours of direct sun exposure," says Neutrogena, a Los Angeles-based unit of pharmaceuticals titan Johnson & Johnson.

Neutrogena has quietly begun shipping this line of five products to outlets across the country. The line, including Neutrogena Ultrasheer Dry-Touch Sunblock and Neutrogena Age Shield Sunblock, will be available at Drugstore.com within the next two weeks and by mid- February in CVS and Walgreens stores, a Neutrogena

spokeswoman said. Nearly all major drugstores and mass retailers will be stocked with it by early March.

Neutrogena is preparing a splashier launch this spring before the start of the summer vacation season, but dermatologists are already buzzing about the products. Samples were given away at the Neutrogena booth during the annual meeting of the American Society of Cosmetic Dermatology and Aesthetic Surgery earlier this month in Las Vegas.

It's an "incredible advance," says James M. Spencer, a St. Petersburg, Fla., dermatologist. He described the products at the Las Vegas meeting as part of his presentation on emerging sun-protective agents. Because Helioplex isn't a drug, its commercialization doesn't require FDA approval, he said. Dr. Spencer says he doesn't have any financial ties to Neutrogena.

Meanwhile, a unit of Miami-based Ivax Corp. has begun selling a food supplement, Heliocare, which it says reduces the damaging effects of sunlight on skin. The orange capsules are made from the extract of a fern that grows in Honduras. It has been available in Europe for nearly 30 years, largely to treat skin problems such as psoriasis. Ivax says it's confident that the product is safe, even for children, because of its long track record in Europe.

Given Heliocare's appeal to some dermatologists, Ivax plans to promote it more like a drug than a food supplement. The hope is that physicians will recommend it to their patients, who will in turn ask their pharmacists for it. Ivax has acquired U.S. rights to Heliocare from Industrial Farmaceutica Cantabria SA in Madrid.

Skin-care experts are intrigued by the potential of an oral agent to prevent skin damage, especially since topical sunscreens are rarely applied as thoroughly or as often as needed. "There's an impressive body of scientific literature about [Heliocare's] effects, although it's not a drug" and hasn't undergone rigorous scientific studies needed to determine if it prevents sun-related diseases, said William Eaglstein, president of Ivax Dermatologicals Inc.

Heliocare comes in a jar containing about 60 capsules and is sold at a retail cost of about a dollar per capsule. "We recommend that people take one a day, and if they go into the sun, they should take a second at midday," Dr. Eaglstein said. "We also recommend that people use a sunscreen," because Heliocare isn't a substitute for a topical product, he added.

Sun protection also can be achieved with clothing that blocks ultraviolet radiation. But many fabrics don't do the job well enough for fair-skinned people. Several years ago, a laundry additive was developed containing a chemical that absorbs certain wavelengths, preventing them from penetrating and burning the skin. But the product, Sunguard, was hard to find when sold in stores alongside detergents and clothing dyes.

Closely held Phoenix Brands LLC of Stamford, Conn., acquired Sunguard from European household-products company Unilever two years ago. Phoenix Brands has been trying to promote Sunguard directly to moms with young kids.

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