

Addressing Patient Concerns about Sunscreen Safety

Given the media coverage of a new report questioning the safety of sunscreens, it is important to be prepared for questions from your patients.

By Joel Schlessinger, MD

What have you been telling patients about the Environmental Working Group report regarding the safety of sunscreens?

We have had multiple patients who have questioned the safety of sunscreens containing oxybenzone and retinyl palmitate in particular. Sadly, it is impossible to prove a negative, such as the posed theory that sunscreen ingredients are dangerous. Additionally, there is no question that some patients are being scared into not using sunscreens due to this unfounded hype about whether their sunscreen is safe or not.

We are telling patients to use caution in children and use sunscreens that have physical blocks for now, although the FDA at present has no recommendations or restrictions on these products for children. The unfortunate part of this is that other, less effective sunscreens are being recommended that will undoubtedly lead to more skin cancer in these same children later on in life.

A recent statement by the Personal Care Products Council (<http://www.cosmeticsandtoiletries.com/reg->

[ulatory/uvfilters/49695482.html](http://www.cosmeticsandtoiletries.com/regulatory/uvfilters/49695482.html)) is very informative and should be something that every dermatology office can access in order to respond to these questions.

Are you still seeing follow-through on patients who have purchased Latisse in the past?

Yes and no. As with any product or procedure, maintaining interest and ongoing contact is essential to keep up the patient's reasons to continue. Therefore, we have events every three to six months in our spa and/or clinic in which we offer gifts with purchase of Latisse or other cosmeceuticals. These gifts can be anything from samples of lotions to products in the office that may be excess stock.

On another note, we have also seen patients who desire a less expensive alternative to Latisse. For these patients we offer non-prescription forms of eyelash growth products such as Jan Marini MariniLash and RapidLash products. These can be used to lengthen the lashes or maintain results of Latisse. While I don't think they work as well as Latisse, they do offer an alternative that can assist those who have budgetary constraints.

We work with the state to make sure that we are in compliance of all statutes in order to carry Latisse, and it is important to make sure that you are able to offer this in your state as some states will not allow physician prescription dispensing in offices. ■

Send your questions to tpigeon@bmctoday.com. Dr. Schlessinger will answer your query or find an expert who can.

