

Lazing on a Sunny Afternoon

After ten years, the FDA finally moves on sunscreen labeling rules.

The summer sun is blazing, and vacationers by the thousands are reaching for sunscreen to protect their skin. However, the summer of 2009 may be the last for sunscreen as we know it, as the FDA have moved to implement new sunscreen labeling regulations.

These new rules will banish familiar terms that the FDA feels are misleading, such as “sunblock” and “waterproof.” Detailed safety instructions will be added to labels, advising consumers to reapply sunscreen more frequently, cover up with protective clothing and avoid too much sun time. Labels will also educate consumers on how much (or how little) the product protects consumers from not just the burn-inducing UVB rays but also the UVA rays that can often penetrate through sunscreen and cause photoaging and skin damage.

While it is commendable that the FDA appears to be taking action that will improve consumer understanding of sunscreen’s shortcomings, the meandering path that has led to this conclusion also reflects the FDA’s inefficiencies.

To consumers, the new sunscreen labeling may be a no-brainer. For safety’s sake, sunscreen labels should be detailed and educational—and the FDA should swiftly implement rules to ensure that happens. But the sad reality is that the FDA has taken over 10 years to execute this labeling initiative since originally proposing it. Over the course of that decade, it is likely that skin

damage was inflicted on consumers who, believing what they read on misleading sunscreen labels, failed to reapply sunscreen frequently enough or incorrectly assumed that their sunscreen was providing complete protection.



Too Little, Too Late?

The FDA’s sunscreen labeling regulations, while welcome, only tell part of the story. For example, the dangerous UVA rays that the FDA is just now acknowledging have been well-known in natural health circles to trigger inflammation and free radical-induced damage in both the skin and retina of the eye. While the FDA was lollygagging on sunscreen labeling, the natural products industry was investing heavily in cutting-edge, research-backed nutritional supplementation designed to bolster internal defenses against these UVA threats. While sunscreen labels were misleading consumers, the natural products industry was educating

consumers on the realities of both UVA and UVB radiation.

When it comes to protection from the sun’s damaging rays, consumers must take control of their own health freedom by independently gathering knowledge that will help keep them safe. With a little research, consumers will confirm sunscreen’s critical importance, but also learn that sunscreen can diminish the body’s natural production of vitamin D. Deeper research reveals that a number of nutritional compounds can work together with sunscreen to provide more complete protection—helping to defend skin health from the inside out. Among these are cutting-edge antioxidant and inflammation-modulating nutrients such as FloraGLO® lutein, GliSODin®, astaxanthin and Pycnogenol®.

Finally, the sunscreen labeling initiative reminds us that the FDA’s resources appear to be stretched very thin. The FDA took over 10 years to address misleading product labeling that left Americans vulnerable to UV radiation risks. If the FDA’s resources are so limited, then why would they waste effort scrutinizing the natural nutritional supplements that could help protect Americans against UV radiation?

We must always continue asking questions for the sake of health freedom. You can maintain your vigilance and take control of your own destiny by supporting the natural products industry that provides you with evidence-based health knowledge. To learn more, visit www.nha2009.com and join the Nutritional Health Alliance today! ■

*This editorial is a public service announcement sponsored by the Nutritional Health Alliance (NHA).