

# in the summertime

Karen Deehan discusses effective sun care protection

Now that Summer is just around the corner, we can expect the usual warnings about sun protection. As a nation we're becoming increasingly well educated about the dangers of UV rays, but few people realise that sunscreens may not offer adequate protection.

Recent figures from Cancer Research UK show that over 13,000 people develop malignant melanoma each year, compared with around 1,800 in the mid-1970s. These soaring statistics are partly due to the rising popularity of sunny package holidays. Paradoxically, sunscreens are now available with SPF's in excess of 60, so why aren't they protecting us from skin cancer?

## the numbers game

The answer lies partly in the misconceptions surrounding sun creams. Clients who take sun care seriously may be using very high SPF's, but the numbering system can be misleading. It's logical to assume that SPF30 is twice as effective as SPF15, but in fact it only blocks 4% more UV rays. The temptation with very high SPF's is to only apply them once or twice a day because there's a perception that their protection lasts longer. This is potentially very dangerous because they still need to be reapplied at least every two hours, and immediately after swimming, regardless of how high the SPF is. Experts advise us to apply them as a 'thick, buttery layer', but most people don't use nearly enough.

In addition to this, research has shown that chemicals in sun creams with a high SPF can turn into damaging free radicals when left on the skin. It's therefore much wiser to use SPF15-25, which filters around 94% of the sun's rays and contains less harmful compounds, and simply apply it more frequently.

The danger with exposing skin to light for too long lies in the fact that damage isn't always immediately obvious, so your clients may not realise the harm they're doing.



UVA rays are particularly dangerous because they don't cause burning, so there's no immediate sign that any damage is being done. In fact, the tell-tale pigmentation marks, excessive wrinkles and leathery texture often don't become apparent until many years later and, as we've already seen, most sunscreens don't block these rays.

To make matters worse, most people don't realise that UVA rays are also present in artificial light. Even if your clients aren't

sun worshippers, they still need to protect their skin from indoor lighting. UVB rays also result in premature ageing, but their danger is more obvious because they cause sunburn, and they're only present in natural daylight.

## antioxidant protection

An important point to bear in mind is that most sun creams only filter UVB rays, and not UVA. There are some 'broad spectrum'

