

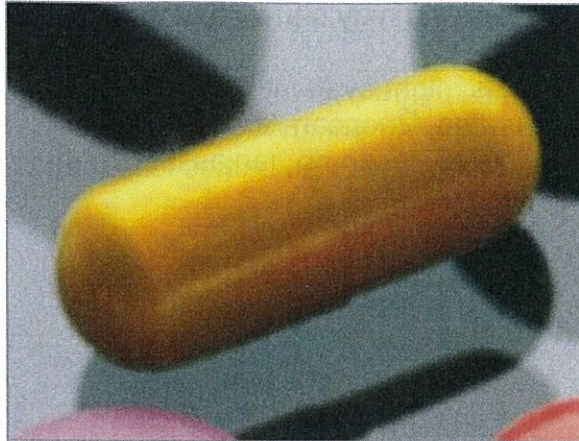
NEW PILL A RAY OF HOPE FOR SUN LOVERS

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AN over-the-counter pill claims to protect your skin from the sun.

Doctors recommend sun worshippers take it in conjunction with - not instead of - sunscreen.



Heliocare (heliocare.com) calls itself an all-natural oral antioxidant that helps maintain skin's ability to protect itself from UV ray damage and aging. A bottle of 60 capsules sells online for \$62.99 and is also available at pharmacies.

It's made from a fern extract that works as a "potent oral supplement," says Dr. Albert Lefkovits, a Park Avenue dermatologist and associate clinical professor at Mount Sinai who recommends it to his sun-sensitive patients to be used along with sunscreen.

"Heliocare increases tolerance to the sun and absorbs free radicals - the substances that can damage the DNA in skin cells," Lefkovits says, adding that it also helps minimize the effects of aging.

"One of the biggest factors to aging is prolonged exposure to ultraviolet light - the spectrum of the sun that causes suntanning," Lefkovits says.

Lefkovits suggests Heliocare pills for patients who are fair-skinned and burn easily, or those on phototoxic medications or tranquilizers and skin cancer patients - as long as they aren't pregnant, nursing or under 10.

Still, his recommendation comes with caution: "As far as we know, Heliocare is free from many harmful effects. But until something has been used on millions of people, you don't really know what effect will be found," Lefkovits says.

The new pill comes at a time when lotion is getting a bad rap. Consumers worried about the unknown effect of toxins in sunscreens are pushing the Food and Drug Administration to relabel them.

Pediatricians have expressed concern about potentially carcinogenic chemicals in sunscreens (as well as lip balms and moisturizers) that contain oxybenzone, a chemical used to screen UV rays that are hormone disrupters and may cause cell damage.

Some doctors believe the chemicals might even increase the risk of skin cancer. Despite the danger, the American Academy of Pediatrics still recommends sunscreen - even on babies less than 6 months old - as the lesser of two evils.