



New wrinkle in sunscreen

Sunscreen with UVA-blocking Mexoryl, designed to better protect skin, hits the U.S. Oct. 1.

By MAYRAV SAAR

THE Food and Drug Administration recently approved a sunscreen ingredient that could help slow the telltale signs of aging.

When it hits shelves Oct. 1, Mexoryl will be the only stable sunscreen ingredient that can filter UVA waves. Most sunscreens filter or block UVB, but few have an effect on UVA — the ultraviolet rays that penetrate deep in the skin and are responsible for wrinkles and skin spots.

Skin-care specialists in the United States have long awaited the arrival of Mexoryl, an ingredient found in European sunscreens since the 1980s, said Dr. Daniel F. Rubin, a dermatologist at Cedars Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles.

"Dermatologists in the United States have been frustrated for years that this was available in Europe but not here," Rubin said. "This is not a Third World country."

UVB rays have long been known for causing tans, sunburn and for playing a role in the development of skin cancer. But in recent years, UVA has emerged as an equally dangerous villain — one that can penetrate glass and clouds and accounts for up to 95 percent of the solar UV radiation reaching the Earth's surface.

Other filters that protect against UVA radiation — octocrylene and avobenzone, or Parsol 1789 — either work against only part of the UVA spectrum or are not photo-

stable, meaning they tend to break down when exposed to sunlight for too long. Zinc oxide and titanium dioxide can physically block the penetration of UVA rays, but who wants to look as though they've smeared cream cheese across their nose?

Mexoryl will be available in Anthelios SX, a daily moisturizer by L'Oréal, the company that patented Mexoryl in Europe in 1982. Anthelios SX will have a sun protection factor (SPF) of 15. Since UVA radiation doesn't fluctuate much during the year, New Yorkers are advised to slather it on even in the winter.

Critics question why L'Oréal is not offering Mexoryl in a sunscreen with a higher SPF. A company spokeswoman hinted that higher SPFs will likely be offered in the future.

"This is a very valuable new agent, but it shouldn't lull anybody into a false sense of security," said Dr. Albert M. Lefkovits, assistant clinical professor of dermatology at the Mount Sinai School of Medicine and a member of the medical advisory council of the Skin Cancer Foundation in New York. "You should still use a hat, and you'll still want to stay out of the sun."

But Rubin said the market for Anthelios is likely less worried about cancer as they are about crow's-feet.

"Most of my patients will respond more if I say this is a way of preventing aging," Rubin said. "No woman wants to look an hour older than she is."