



Back to Sun, fun and laundry detergent. Really?

Sun, fun and laundry detergent. Really?

May 31, 2012

Ashante Infantry

A range of products from laundry detergents to shampoos are vying to protect consumers from the sun.

From TRESemé's Climate Control line, which claims to use keratin, olive oil and UV Blockers to create "a barrier between your hair and the annoying effects of humidity, wind, UV rays, and static," to SunGuard laundry additive, which says it "washes UV protection right into clothes," there seem to be a lot of options to ward off the sun's harmful rays.

But with skin cancer rates on the rise — the risk of developing melanoma is now one in 70 — dermatologists, who have been exhorting sun avoidance and sunscreen, are skeptical.

"It is all marketing, isn't it? And they're really playing on people's desire to get away with not having to wear protective clothing," said dermatology professor Beatrice Wang, director of McGill University Health Centre's melanoma clinic.

Take the TRESemé collection, the fine print of which doesn't actually promise to do anything more than "control your style."

"It's not going to protect your scalp; really you have to go with hats," said Wang. "What they are a benefit for is for people who dye their hair. The dye can be kind of bleached out by UV exposure, so it protects the colouring, but it's not going to protect your head."

On the other hand, SunGuard pledges that one cycle adds Ultraviolet Protection Factor of UPF 30 to every garment for up to 20 washings, barring the skin-cancer-linked ultraviolet rays that "can actually penetrate clothing and leave you vulnerable to sun damage."

"How does it really work? It sounds a little bit too good to be true," said Peter Vignjevic, a dermatology professor at McMaster University Medical School.

The laundry additive is a step away from UV-protective clothing, which infuses fabric with chemicals that absorb UV rays, such as titanium dioxide or Tinosorb. Once the realm of specialty retailers catering to skin cancer patients, the garments, which come in light fabrics such as cotton and linen and are available in summer whites and pastels, are now hot sellers for brands like The Gap, Izod, Uniqlo and Lands End, according to the New York Times.

"With clothing, it's a little bit easier to see how it's protecting you, physically blocking you, as opposed to something like laundry detergent," said Vignjevic.