

NEW KIDS ON THE BLOCK

Next-gen sunscreens make big promises — but do they actually work?

By MOLLY SHEA

WHEN it comes to anti-aging, dermatologists agree that sunscreen is the most important thing you can put on your body.

But with so many new formulations out there promising not just to block the sun's rays — but also pollution, wrinkles and the light emitted from your many tech devices — which one do you choose?

Begin with your skin type: "For people with oily skin, it's better to use powder or gel, while drier skin types want a lotion," says DC-based dermatologist Elizabeth Tanzi, founder and director of Capital Laser & Skin Care.

You'll also have to pick between mineral sunscreens and chemical ones. Mineral formulas, which contain zinc oxide and/or titanium dioxide, sit on top of the skin and block ultraviolet rays from penetrating. Chemical formulas protect by absorbing and converting UV rays into heat before they can cause damage.

Both work, but Tanzi advises those with sensitive skin types to skip potentially irritating chemical sunscreens and go for newer mineral formulations that now melt into the skin.

Next, decide what else you want in a formula — creamy or watery? Tinted, white or clear? Hydrating or anti-oxidant-heavy?

But don't let the buzzwords sway your decision-making too much. Although sunscreens that burst with benefits sound sexy, Tanzi says they may not be worth the higher price tag.

"Just because a whole bunch of things are packed into a product doesn't make it beneficial," she says. "Anti-oxidants, for example, are notoriously unstable — if you're going right out into the sun, [they] might degrade."

She suggests applying anti-oxidants, such as those in a serum, separately at night. If you spend more time in front of a screen, you may want to try a formula that also offers protection from blue light.

"Sunscreens [that protect against digital light] usually have iron oxide," she says. "It seems to block out more of the shorter waves, or the blue waves, that come out of devices."

But Tanzi cautions that the jury's still out on what blue light can do to skin, and how much iron oxide (or marigold extract, a natural alternative thought to absorb blue light) can help. "It's certainly not a bad thing to prevent, but it remains to be seen how much [iron oxide] will do that."

Once you've found your formula and slathered it on, don't forget to reapply. "I tell my patients to apply every two to three hours, because the products do break down," says Tanzi.

Below, six noteworthy newcomers.

Light as air

Hate slippery, goeey lotions? This water-resistant foam dispenses like shaving cream, then sinks effortlessly into skin. A blend of oils means this SPF 50 mousse hydrates as it blocks rays — and is best used on the body, rather than the face. The chemical formula may not be best for those with sensitive skin, though. *Supergoop! sunscreen mousse*, \$34 at Sephora.com.

Gloss and go

Your lips are just as susceptible to sun damage — and skin cancer — as the rest of your face. This moisturizing gloss packs chemical SPF 30, along with coconut extract and skin-softening cupuacu butter to keep your pout smooth and burn-free. *SPF 30 lip gele*, \$22 at HamptonSunCare.com

Hair raiser

Hair stylist Nunzio Saviano's frizz-fighting hair wipes deposit sunscreen on your strands. Necessary? Probably not, says Tanzi. But if you're worried your dye job might fade, they can't hurt. *Anti-frizz hair sheets*, \$18 for 12 sheets at NunzioSaviano.com

Plant power

This SPF 30 mineral cream is meant to block against both sunlight and blue light, though it's unclear if and how much marigold extract effectively combats screen rays. Sunflower and safflower seed oils moisturize. *Farmacy "Green Screen" daily environmental protector*, \$36 at Sephora.com

Hint of tint

The bronze hue of this SPF 30 chemical sunscreen flatters most skin tones, while marula and raspberry seed oils moisturize. Anti-oxidants, including grape juice and sunflower-shoot extracts, help fight the effects of pollution, but Tanzi cautions that they can break down quickly in the sun. *Umbr Tinte*, \$36 at DrunkElephant.com

Barely there

Dr. Barbara Sturm — whose "blood cream" moisturizer is made from the owner's plasma — offers this SPF that sinks seamlessly into skin. Pat on as-is, or mix a few drops into your moisturizer or foundation for SPF 50 protection. It's a chemical sunscreen, but it's formulated for sensitive skin. *Dr. Barbara Sturm "Sun Drops"*, \$145 at Net-A-Porter.com