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WWD

AUG 2015 No. 2

# WWD

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## Gentle Reminder

Brands are heeding the call of sensitive skin.

By JAYME CYK

**A**s more beauty products have become high-tech and chemically potent, an increasing number of consumers find they are paying a price. But not just in money – in wear and tear on their faces. More and more consumers are labeling their skin as sensitive and manufacturers have risen to the challenge. Like the array of sensitive skin cases, there's a robust lineup of launches from brands like Dr. Dennis Gross Skincare to Chanel catering to sensitive skin types.

According to Mintel's Global New Products Database, between Jan. 1 and April 1, 2014, sensitive skin claims represented 25 percent of total skin-care claims, compared to 15 percent in 2009. Also, 71 percent of facial skin-care users say they are interested in ultragentle products. Mintel estimated that sales of sensitive and gentle skin-care products are more than \$202 million, with the bulk of revenues coming from the facial cleanser and facial moisturizer segments.

To that end, Dr. Dennis Gross, New York dermatologist and creator of Dr. Dennis Gross Skincare, noted that 51 percent of Americans describe their skin as sensitive.

Keeping with that trend, Dr. Dennis Gross Skincare will unveil a peel for sensitive skin at Sephora this month. Containing no mechanical abrasion, the Alpha Beta Ultra Gentle Daily Peel, priced at \$88, comes with two steps, one to exfoliate and smooth and the other to firm and lift.

"The more products you use, the more you risk causing your skin to have sensitivity," said Gross. "People's use of the word 'sensitive' has increased in terms of the scope. It's a big umbrella. When I think of sensitivity and I talk to patients about it, it means their skin is red or they've had irritation of some sort, but now people use the word 'sensitive' to include dryness or a little bit red. Any irritation on the skin that they are seeing, they are labeling it as sensitivity."

Gross is seeing patients across all ages describing their skin as sensitive. He added that younger clients tend to see acne or rosacea and older patients notice dryness, flakiness or redness. Due to this diverse demographic, Gross is looking to expand his offering to sensitive skin individuals.

According to Virginia Lee, Euromonitor's senior research analyst, there's a lot more awareness of sensitive skin. "Companies are either introducing sublines targeted to sensitive skin or making it more clear in their packaging and literature," she said. "There's more concern about food allergies, pollution and city living, too."

Although Gross declined to comment on financials, industry sources estimate that the gentle peel could do \$5 million by the end of 2015.

Meanwhile, brands like Guerlain and Bonpoint are catering to sensitive skin with new collections for fall. Priced from \$55 for eye makeup remover to \$78 for a cleansing cream, Guerlain is launching a range of gentle cleansers infused with nigella oil, which was selected for its antioxidant properties. Bonpoint has created a hypoallergenic assortment that the company claims can be used for the most sensitive skin, babies. The eight-piece line includes a blend of cherry blossom, orange blossom and

cotton flower to nourish and soothe skin.

Even Chanel, a brand that tends to include fragrance in its skin care, is launching a sensitive skin cream in October priced at \$80 called La Solution 10 de Chanel. Named for having just 10 ingredients, this includes silver needle tea as its key ingredient to regulate skin's response to irritants.

"Women don't necessarily have sensitive skin, but they may have a heightened awareness," said Karen Grant, global beauty industry analyst at The NPD Group. "Brands are recognizing the need for fine-tuning a bit more customization in their offerings. Consumers are definitely in the mind-set today both for prevention as well as correction."

"With the technology of skin care and the urge to make things more active, we're rendering our skin more vulnerable," said Rachel Lang, an aesthetician and cofounder of Facelove Fitness.

That rings true, as Euromonitor reported consumers are more cognizant of the possible irritation from synthetic ingredients in fragrances, preservatives and gluten.

Drunk Elephant, a skin-care line formulated without essential oils and with nontoxic ingre-

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Dr. Dennis Gross, creator, Dr. Dennis Gross Skincare

dients like marula oil, thermal mud and fruit enzymes, is seeing success in the skin-care market. In September, Sephora will launch a wall of its favorite skin-care brands, Drunk Elephant being one of them.

"At Drunk Elephant, we don't believe in sensitive skin," said Tiffany Masterson, founder and chief creative officer of the brand. "Only insensitive products and ingredients."

She added, "There's a huge misconception in the marketplace with natural and organic labels. Consumers think it's good for sensitive skin. It hasn't been true for me and it's one of the reasons why I formulated my line."

According to Priya Venkatesh, vice president and divisional merchandise manager of skin and hair care at Sephora, companies that cater to sensitive skin are among its top 10 brands, especially within cleansers and moisturizers.

"People are discovering new causes of skin inflammation, which can often be perceived as sensitive skin," said Venkatesh. "Factors such as allergies, environmental stressors, frequent travel, health issues and aggressive acids, especially on darker-skinned women, are common causes. We are seeing more dermatologists putting an emphasis on sensitive skin. Many of the Korean and Japanese brands already formulate for sensitive skin, and their rising popularity will continue to



impact the North American market."

Euromonitor's Lee agreed. "The current interest in Korean skin-care products in the U.S. has to do with many of them claiming to be more natural," she said. "That is ideating growth."

Furthermore, Pai Skincare, a U.K.-based certified organic collection free of alcohol, fragrance and chemicals, caters specifically to sensitive skin and is set on helping consumers identify what triggers are leading to their sensitivity.

"There are lots of different types of sensitive skin, which can be influenced by underlying conditions, lifestyle, diet and product sensitization, which can be a result of using more active products on our skin more regularly," said Sarah Brown, founder of Pai Skincare. "The danger is that creating products for skin sensitivities brings real responsibility and requires a lot of formulation effort."

Brown has managed to find her niche in the market. Her products bring remedial benefits along with a sensorial experience.

"Pai is always one of my top-five selling brands," said Jessica Richards, founder of Brooklyn's Shen Beauty. "People come into Shen and say they have sensitive skin because they don't know what they are reacting to. Clients don't come to Shen and say, 'I have acne.' They say, 'I started breaking out, so I have sensitive skin.' In my opinion, Pai really hit the nail on the head because their packaging clearly states, 'for sensitive skin.'"

A lot of natural and organic brands have the notion of being better for sensitive skin types, but not all are created equal. Most tend to be formulated with essential oils, which, in most cases, are not so essential.

"Less is more," said Facelove's Lang, who treats sensitive skin without products and with acupuncture, which

puts skin in a state of rest or sedation allowing it to kick-start the repair process. "The botanical and organic brands aren't necessarily great for sensitive skin because plants are really active [and can sometimes cause irritation]."

Valérie Grandury, founder and chief executive officer of Odacité, a skin-care line that is formulated with the company's proprietary freshness date that indicates exactly how long the product will maintain its optimal effectiveness, added, "Because essential oils are so potent, they need to be used at a low concentration. The scent should be there, but it doesn't stay with you like a perfume. It has to go away. If it doesn't then it's probably too concentrated."

"It's important to remember that essential oils can bring remedial benefits, too, so it's not a black-and-white issue," said Brown. "It's up to manufacturers to do their due diligence."

Grant added, "The consumers with sensitive skin are more engaged in the beauty category. They are more careful and more loyal to their product choices. There will be more products offering a more simplified approach to skin care while speaking to the consumer in a straightforward way." ■