

Sunscreen put under spotlight

By Amy Lawson Health Reporter
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THE Therapeutic Goods Administration will investigate the safety of a new sunscreen technology due to concerns it could damage skin cells.

Zinc oxide nanoparticles have been used in Australian sunscreens for several years, including model Megan Gale's Invisible Zinc range.

When used in nanoparticle - one millionth of a millimetre - form, zinc dioxide cannot be seen on the skin but gives a broader protection against UVA and UVB than regular chemical sunscreen.

The TGA said that while there was no evidence that sunscreens containing zinc oxide nanoparticles posed any risk, there was a theoretical concern that it could be absorbed into the skin cells and possibly interact with sunlight to increase the risk of damage.

Initial studies have proved inconclusive and further research was needed, it said.

Dr Andrew Penman, chief executive of the NSW Cancer Council, said he had no information on zinc oxide nanoparticles that would cause him concern.

"Zinc oxide nanoparticles offer both a sunscreen which is more cosmetically acceptable than the standard zinc oxide sunscreen and gives a higher level of protection than chemical sunscreen," he said. "If the benefits are realised it will be fantastic."

Dr Penman said Cancer Council sunscreen contained microfine particles of zinc oxide, which are bigger than the nanoparticles and therefore didn't raise the same concerns about their absorption into the skin.

But he said the zinc oxide nanoparticles were at the cutting edge of technology.

"Zinc gives you a very uniform protection across the entire UV spectrum, which you don't get with chemical sunscreen," he said.

Source: The Sun-Herald