

Senators Want FDA to Block Misleading Sunscreens

WASHINGTON, DC - In an effort to ensure sunscreen labels are clear, accurate, and provide consumers with the information they need to protect themselves, a group of U.S. Senators, led by Jack Reed (D-RI), is asking the Federal Drug Administration (FDA) to reverse course and put comprehensive new sunscreen standards into effect this summer.

Because sunscreens have been considered a cosmetic, they have largely avoided government oversight and the FDA hasn't changed its recommendations for sunscreen standards in over 30 years.

However, last June, after years of prodding by Senator Reed, the FDA ordered comprehensive new sunscreen regulations that were scheduled to go into effect on June 18, 2012. But this month the FDA announced it is now giving the industry an extra six months to make changes, meaning they will take effect in mid-December instead of this summer.

This week, Senators Reed, Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), John Kerry (D-MA), Patrick Leahy (D-VT), Bernie Sanders (I-VT), and Chuck Schumer (D-NY) sent a letter asking the FDA to “ reverse the recent decision to delay these critical regulations and to do more to ensure that consumers can purchase sunscreen products and products containing sun protection with the knowledge that they meet FDA’ s enforceable standards.”

Among the changes FDA is supposed to make:

- In order for sunscreens to be labeled as "Broad Spectrum" they must block both UVA and UVB rays. UVA rays cause skin aging; UVB rays cause sunburn. Both can cause cancer.

- Products with SPF's below 15 must display a warning that it has not been shown to help prevent skin cancer or early skin aging.
- The terms "sunblock," "sweatproof," and "waterproof" will no longer be permitted. Sunscreens may claim to be "water-resistant," but must specify whether they protect skin for 40 or 80 minutes of swimming or sweating, based on standard testing.
- Products may no longer claim to provide sun protection for more than two hours without submitting test results to prove it.
- All sunscreens must include standard "Drug Facts" information on the back or side of the container.