

DISPOSABLE EYEWEAR: PROS & CONS

BY BRENDA FISHBAUGH

Many indoor tanning salon operators aren't aware that disposable eye protection created for our industry is FDA-compliant and allowed by every state (and even every country, worldwide). More disposable eyewear is used in salons than all goggle types, combined.

The disposable and goggle eye protection concepts differ in several ways. Goggles are available in three designs: a one-piece style with a nose bridge, the two-piece design with two separate eye cups, and a snap-apart style that offers both options. Regardless of design, a goggle employs one of three ways to stay secure on the tanner's face during their session: an elastic strap that goes around the head, a pinching mechanism that holds it to the nose, or, the goggle just rests over the eyes. If it just rests over the eyes, you'll note that the packaging says it can't be used for stand-up tanning. If a goggle comes with an elastic strap, then it must

be worn with the strap to fit properly and be FDA-compliant unless the directions clearly specify otherwise. The pinching-type goggle doesn't employ elastic, but often has to be bent to fit snugly around the eye. If it doesn't fit the face properly, it's not the appropriate product to use.

Disposable eye protection is made from a shiny film. Basically a quarter-sized, oval-shaped "sticker", it is most similar in concept to a two-piece goggle style. The tanner removes each oval from its paper backing and folds it into a cone shape, according to the directions printed on the backing. A light, medical adhesive keeps the cone in place on the eyelid. No nose bridge or elastic band is required, and unlike goggles, the design allows it to stay in place during vertical tanning, or if a tanner rolls over while lying in a sunbed. There are also disposables shaped to create a taller cone that accommodates longer eyelashes, but the "fold into a cone" concept is the same.

The biggest surprise with disposables is that when formed into a cone, you can see through it, with about the same visibility as

sunglasses. All FDA-compliant eye protection must be a complete UV block, but also must allow enough visible light through to allow a tanner to shut off the tanning unit in case of an emergency. You've probably noticed that you can see through goggles, too; some styles have better visibility than others. Some tanners like to use their cell phones for texting while tanning – you'll want to suggest they try disposables or a goggle with high visibility. You don't want

It's very important to train your staff on ALL eye protection brands you carry, so they can knowledgeably suggest an appropriate product for each tanner.

them removing goggles (or not wearing them at all) during a session to check their Social Networks!

Unlike goggles, disposable eye protection is licensed by the FDA for one-time use – you use a pair once, and then throw it away. Considered a Class One Medical Product, they're the same as cotton balls and tongue depressors. Would you want your doctor saving that tongue depressor for your next check-up? Same idea

continued on p. 92 ☺


with disposables; the eye is a mucous membrane just like your nose, mouth, ears and genitals – through which germs and diseases can enter the body.

The easy, one-time use makes disposable eyewear perfect for the tanner who forgot her goggles or has come to your salon for the first time. Some salons provide disposables for free and some charge for them. For example, A Total Tan salons in Indiana and Ohio offer free disposables to each customer, but sell goggles to those who want their own pair. Others, such as Sun Tan City in Kentucky and Tennessee, insist tanners buy eye protection, whether goggles or disposable. You'll find that some tanners prefer disposables for sanitary reasons – little chance of disease or germ issues when eyewear is disposed of after every use. Another unique feature of disposables is that it's adjustable, minimizing the dreaded "raccoon eyes" tan lines.

Disposable eye protection is an option for tanners who simply don't want to

wear goggles. The tanner can adjust disposables to fit their face, doesn't have to worry about cleaning their goggles or be concerned whether "community" goggles were properly cleaned. The downside of disposables is that your staff must learn how to properly fold the cone, and train every new tanner, as well.

Sadly, some tanners choose disposables because they're less expensive than goggles, and will show your staff an unused pair as proof they have eye protection. Of course, these tanners aren't wearing any eye protection at all! This can be addressed by providing complimentary disposables, or marking today's date on the backing so that it "expires" after today. Many salon staffs fold cones for the tanner when they purchase them, which prevents re-use. If your tanner wears their disposables multiple times to save a quarter or two, you can share the product manufacturer's "One Time Use" letter stating the FDA's position on re-use, or try any of the above-mentioned ideas.

It's very important to have lots of eye protection options, and a well trained staff who tries ALL brands you carry, so they can speak knowledgeably and suggest what product might work best for each tanner. 



Tanning industry veteran Brenda Fishbaugh is president of Eye Pro, Inc., makers of disposable eyewear. She travels extensively training salons on the effects of UV light on vision.

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