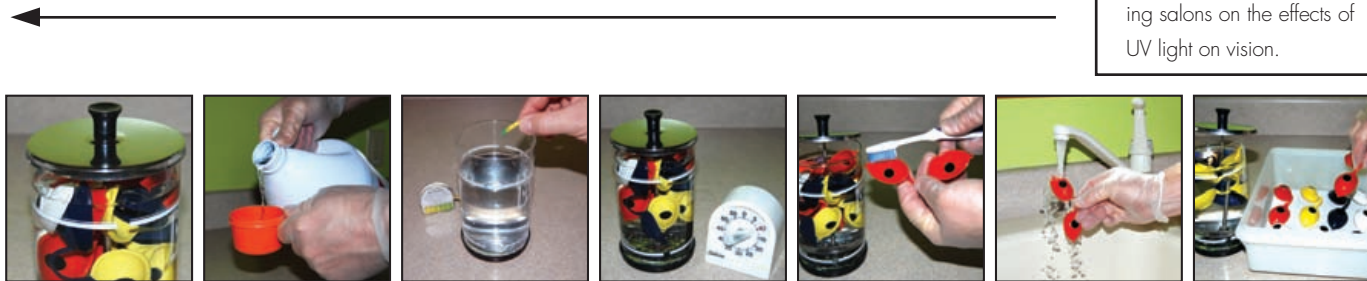




Tanning industry veteran Brenda Fishbaugh is president of Eye Pro, Inc., makers of disposable eyewear. She travels extensively training salons on the effects of UV light on vision.

HOW TO KEEP H1N1 OUT OF YOUR SALON!

by Brenda Fishbaugh



Since about half of the tanning salons in the U.S. provide shared (“community”) goggles, I thought this was a great time to review your goggle cleaning procedure and ensure you’re not skipping any steps. After all, it’s cold and flu season, and you don’t want to be part of the problem by spreading the flu among your clients.

Goggles are touched with hands and then put near mucus membranes (the eyes). You need to make sure that goggles are clean enough to go in your tanners’ mouths! Yes, our mouths and eyes are both mucus membranes and provide the easiest way for disease to enter the body.

Did you know that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regulates the procedure for goggle cleaning? The EPA has laid out numerous steps to ensure that goggles are disinfected, which is a higher standard than sanitization. What’s the difference? Proper disinfection kills more diseases on a surface than sanitization does. And with the H1N1 virus going around, I think we can all agree we want our goggles to be spotless!

Salon owners are often shocked to learn that gloves must be worn while mixing solution for goggle cleaning or bed cleaning (see the directions on the bottle.) Why? The concentrated solution is very strong and can hurt your skin. It’s also critical to mix cleaners exactly as instructed – too weak and goggles can spread pink-eye, eye infections and the flu, too strong and you damage the goggles – or someone’s eyes!

Also surprising is the fact that each batch of tanning bed cleaner or goggle cleaner must be tested with a quaternary strip! What’s that? It’s a litmus paper like those used to test swimming pool water – very inexpensive and available from your tanning distributor. Your daily “quat” test must score between 400-700, with 700 being optimum. I recommend that you keep a daily log of test results, in case you get inspected or a customer claims they got a disease from your salon’s beds or goggles!

Most salon owners know to scrub goggles to remove all foreign particles before soaking; a new toothbrush works well. You don’t want a disease lying under that mascara ring on the inside of the eyepiece. And did you know you need to soak goggles in the cleaner for a minimum of 10 minutes? This is the most critical step and is what will kill the H1N1 virus. Your salon should have at least two cleaning tanks prepared, so that your staff doesn’t dump in a pair of dirty goggles on top and then pull them out to be used before the 10 minutes are up. Another tidbit: if elastic straps were sold with the goggles, the goggles were designed and licensed by the FDA to be worn with the straps. Subsequently, straps must stay with the goggles and be disinfected, as well. Why? So that the straps don’t spread lice and dandruff ... eewww!

The next step in the goggle-disinfection process is to rinse them in clean, running water and thoroughly dry them. I’m often asked why goggles should be rinsed. Remember, the cleaning solution is very strong and any residue on the eyepiece can irritate eyes. Don’t use a dip tank to rinse them; it’s just not clean enough. Drying goggles is important to keep bacteria from growing. The EPA requires clean goggles to be stored where they are protected from airborne contaminants – not left on a sunbed, offered in a basket (think dirty hands touching multiple pairs), and not on a towel at the front counter. Remember to discard cleaning solution each night and remix fresh in the a.m.; solution must be made AT LEAST every 24 hours – bed cleaner also – as it loses its efficacy quickly.

Any eyewear you sell to your tanners must also stay clean. I highly recommend providing clients with a snack-sized, re-sealable bag to keep personal goggles in, so they won’t pick up contaminants from the bottom of a purse, gym bag, etc. If your salon offers disposable eyewear, make sure tanners don’t wear it multiple times, as they can just “re-infect” themselves.

Keeping a clean salon is critical this time of year, and eyewear is a crucial part of your cleaning regime. ■