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Natural Summer Skin Care

Protective Tips for Sunny Days

by Kathleen Barnes



Now that much-anticipated beach vacations, gardening, outdoor sports and other outside summer activities are on our calendars, it's time to practice ways to protect skin from sun damage.

The medical profession has reported loud and clear that too much exposure causes dryness, wrinkling, premature aging and even skin cancer. Yet, many people don't understand that certain types of medications, among other factors, can increase sensitivity to the sun's rays.

People of all types of skin can be susceptible to allergic reactions to sun exposure, and contrary to popular belief, dark-skinned people are not immune. There are many ways to protect skin from overexposure, burning, drying and wrinkling, and careful use of safe sunscreens is one of the best.

Sun Protection from Without

Yale dermatologist Dr. Nicholas Perricone, author of *The Wrinkle Cure*, strongly recommends natural non-chemical sunscreens such as "physical" blockers titanium dioxide and zinc oxide, not chemical sunscreen formulations, for everyone that plans to spend more than a few minutes in the sun. He states, "The benefit of a physical

sunscreen is that it acts like tiny mirrors—deflecting all spectrums of the radiation away from the skin, including the dangerous ultraviolet [UV] rays."

Taking commonsense steps can reduce exposure to both sun damage and sun-blocking products that have, among other synthetic chemical ingredients, paraben-based preservatives and can carry health risks, says medical researcher Elizabeth Plourde, Ph.D., author of *Sunscreens are Biohazards: Treat as Hazardous Waste*.

Plourde supports Australia's Victoria-based SunSmart program, credited with preventing more than 100,000 skin cancers and saving thousands of lives since its inception 32 years ago, in a country with one of the world's highest rates of skin cancer, according to Cancer Council, Australia. Effective UV protection has come from the increased use of hats, sunglasses and protective clothing, including neck-to-knee swimsuits for children.

Rather than use chemicals, Plourde is among the health advocates that suggest sun worshippers seek shade, cover up and avoid sun between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.; be extra-careful when the UV index is high; find the daily National Weather Service forecast assessing the risk of sun overexposure at epa.gov/sunwise/

uvindex; take extra precautions near water, snow and sand, because they reflect and substantially intensify radiation; avoid tanning products or tanning beds, even those advertised as safe; and wear tightly woven, dark, clothing for maximum sun protection. Lightweight denim is a good choice.

Skin Protection from Within

Numerous studies show that specific foods can help provide natural sun protection, working from the inside out, including a class of foods incorporating carotenoids, which give rich colors to fruits and vegetables. According to recent research from Henrich-Heine University, in Dusseldorf, Germany, sub-categories of the nutrients lutein (in dark green leafy veggies) and lycopene (in tomatoes and other pink/red foods) are among the most powerful antioxidants.

Perricone explains, "Numerous scientific studies from around the world show that oral supplementation with carotenes, especially lycopene and beta-carotene, improve skin structure, have powerful wound-healing properties and offer great protection from damage caused by sunlight." Because inflam-

Chemical-Free Sunscreens

Look for sunscreens that contain either zinc oxide or titanium dioxide and are free of cancer-causing parabens. These are a few of the more natural products on the market:

- Aubrey Organics Natural Sun
- Burt's Bees Chemical-Free Sunscreen with hemp seed oil
- Perricone MD More than Moisture
- Jason Sunbrellas Chemical-Free Sun Block
- Lavera Sun
- Nature's Gate Mineral Sportblock

mation is a major cause of many types of skin damage and premature aging, he highly recommends the Mediterranean diet and other eating plans rich in healthy oils like olive oil, omega-3 from walnuts and butternuts and oily fish, along with lots of vegetables and fruits.

A growing body of research from such prestigious institutions as North

Carolina's Duke University and the Xienta Institute for Skin Research, in Pennsylvania, shows that vitamins C and E can protect skin against free radical damage and also reduce the chances of sunburn. Potent antioxidant herbs such as green tea (*Camellia sinensis*) are also proving effective, according to research from the University of Alabama.

Healthy Sun Exposure

Still, sunshine is the best source of vitamin D, so Perricone recommends stepping outside without sunscreen protection for at least 15 minutes a day with as much skin exposed as possible, even when clouds are present, preferably in early morning or evening sunshine. "But don't bake in the sun," the doctor warns.

"Limited sun exposure will increase vitamin D production, known to reduce the risk of many internal cancers, while also reducing the risk of osteoporosis."

Kathleen Barnes is a natural health advocate, author and publisher. Rx from the Garden: 101 Food Cures You Can Easily Grow is among her many books. Visit KathleenBarnes.com.

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