

5 Simple Ways to Prevent Sun Damage

Repeated exposure to the sun's harmful ultraviolet (UV) radiation is thought to be responsible for approximately 70%¹ of skin cancers, and most health experts believe 80%² of the most damaging sun exposure occurs before the age of 18.

The good news is, there are some things you can do right now to dramatically reduce the health risks associated with sun exposure.

Use these simple strategies to help prevent sun damage:

Use sunscreen. Dermatologists recommend choosing a sunscreen with an SPF of at least 30, and reapplying every couple of hours for optimal protection.³

Wear UPF clothing. Clothing with a built-in ultraviolet protection factor (UPF) can help shield your skin from UV light. It can be especially helpful when sunscreen is not practical or available.

Wear a hat. Hats offer a simple form of skin protection, and the wider the brim, the better.

Avoid peak UV ray hours. The sun's rays are most damaging between the hours of 10 AM and 4 PM, so plan your outdoor activities around these times to minimize exposure.

Eat more lycopene. Lycopene is a phytonutrient found in red-colored plants like tomatoes, guava, and watermelon, and research has shown that it is protective against UV-induced skin damage.⁴



Wear sunglasses. UV exposure has been linked to age-related macular degeneration, glaucoma, and cataracts, so remember to protect your eyes from the sun's damaging rays as well.⁵

With just a few simple preventive self-care strategies, you can reduce your exposure to the sun's damaging ultraviolet rays, and ultimately reduce your risk of developing a serious skin condition.

1. <https://doi.org/10.1155/S1110724301000122>

2. <https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/diseases/10985-sun-exposure--skin-cancer>

3. <https://www.aad.org/public/everyday-care/sun-protection/sunscreen-patients/>

4. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-017-05568-7>

5. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ibio.201700377>

Hydration and Skin Health

Does water really improve your skin health? For years, health blogs and beauty magazines have insisted that hydration plays a central role in skin health. So far, though, the research has not backed up those claims.⁶

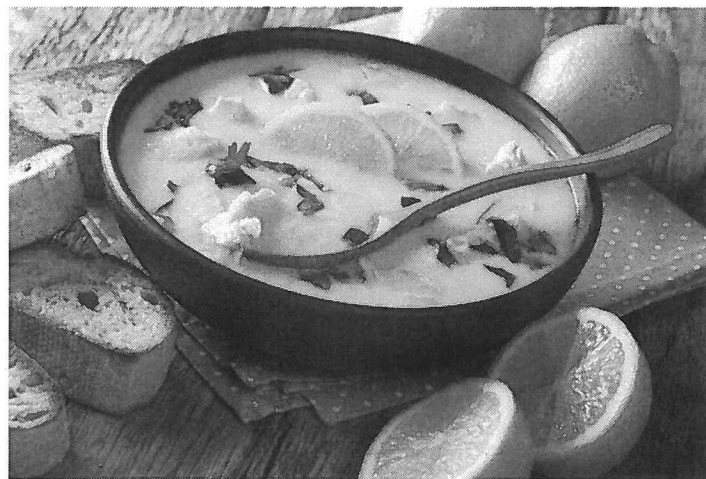
There is little doubt that water is essential for good health. Drinking enough fluid enables your body to clear toxic substances from your bloodstream and transport essential nutrients to the cells in your body, including the cells in your skin. Even so, research is lacking in terms of just how much impact hydration has on skin integrity. Nevertheless, creating healthy hydration habits is a good idea.⁷

Here are a few tips to help you get (and stay) hydrated:

Drink lots of water. Fill up a water bottle in the morning to serve as a reminder to drink water throughout the day, and use the bottle to gauge your overall fluid intake.

Include soup several times a week. Soups contain high amounts of fluid and can be a great way to boost your fluid intake. (Soups can also be high in sodium, so check labels carefully.)

Eat 5 to 9 a day. Aim to eat at least 5 (preferably 9) servings of fruits and vegetables each day. Plants contain large amounts of water, and about 20%⁸ of your daily fluid needs come from food sources. In addition to the water content, plants contain beneficial phytonutrients that have been shown to be protective⁹ of skin as well.



While hydration alone may not be the biggest determinant of your skin's overall health, it certainly plays an essential role in your body's ability to maintain optimal function.

6. <https://doi.org/10.3390/nu11010070>
7. <https://doi.org/10.3390/nu2080903>

8. <https://www.eatright.org/food/nutrition/healthy-eating>
9. <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/expert-answers/>

5 Reasons to See a Dermatologist

Dermatologists are doctors who specialize in treating conditions that involve the largest organ in your body—your skin. According to the World Cancer Research Fund, skin cancer is the 19th most common cancer around the globe. A dermatologist can help you identify skin problems early, long before they advance into more serious problems.¹⁰

Here are 5 reasons to see a dermatologist:

You notice a change in your skin. Whenever you discover an unusual change in your skin's color, thickness, shape, or texture, have it examined by a doctor as soon as possible. Melanoma is the most malignant form of skin cancer, and early detection is critical.

Your skin is itchy. Itchy skin is common with conditions like eczema and psoriasis, but it can also occur with allergies, infections, and environmental exposures. Consulting with a dermatologist can help you determine the root cause of your symptoms, so you can select the best treatment.

You are losing excessive amounts of hair. While dermatologists are most known for treating skin conditions, their expertise also extends to hair and nails. Hair loss is often hereditary, but it can also be related to stress, hormonal changes, and a number of other medical conditions.

You have a rash. Rashes and raised, red areas of the skin could be a sign that something else is going on with your health. Infections, reactions to medications, and even changes in laundry detergents or soap can cause changes in your skin.



You are proactive. Having your skin evaluated regularly is a good act of prevention, especially if you spend a lot of time in the sun or are at high risk for skin cancer. Take advantage of local health screening events or schedule an annual appointment with a dermatologist that is covered under your health plan.

Early intervention is key when it comes to preventing serious skin conditions. Be sure to see your primary care provider or dermatologist whenever you notice changes in your skin.

¹⁰. <https://www.wcrf.org/dietandcancer/skin-cancer-statistics/>