

The Wellness Express

Jump on the train to good health

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The Best Ways to Protect Your Skin from Sun Damage

Presented by:

When it comes to your health, the sun is both friend and foe. Like many things, moderation is the key when it comes to sun exposure.

Sunshine is vital to the process of creating vitamin D in your body. Not only does it keep bones healthy, vitamin D may be key to preventing many serious diseases, including cancer.

As you age, however, your ability to synthesize vitamin D from the sun decreases. In fact, seniors only produce about a quarter of the vitamin D from sunlight that young people produce. Another group at risk for a deficiency in this vitamin is dark-skinned people, who are also less able to create sun-based vitamin D.

Unfortunately too much exposure to the sun's rays damages your skin and increases your risk of skin cancer. So how do you find the right balance? Most health experts agree that 10 to 15 minutes of sun exposure each week for an adult is safe. Any longer than this, you should apply sunscreen to areas of your body exposed to sunlight.

But what should you look for in a sunscreen to ensure you're getting the best product?

Read Labels Carefully

When selecting a sunscreen, check the label to make sure the product offers wide-spectrum protection. It should block both UVA and UVB radiation.

The strength of sunscreens is categorized numerically by SPF (Sun Protection Factor). The lower the SPF number, the less of a defense the sunscreen provides. The products that deliver the highest safety are rated SPF 30 to 50 (products rated higher than SPF 50 offer an insignificant increase in protection).

In terms of ingredients, a good sunscreen should contain zinc oxide, titanium dioxide or parsol 1789 (also called *avobenzone*). These ingredients sit on top of the skin rather than being absorbed, providing a stronger sun barrier.

It's best to apply sunscreen 30 minutes before going outdoors. Then reapply it every 15 to 30 minutes while in the sun. If you're exercising or swimming, apply sunscreen again after completing these activities.

Exercise of the Week

Glute Stretch (Figure 4)

Difficulty: Easy to moderate

(Consult your chiropractor before doing this or any other exercise.)

Start: Seated on a chair.

Exercise: Place one ankle on opposite knee. Then, bend forward until you feel a good stretch in hip. Also relax lower back in this position. Hold for 30-60 seconds, and then return to starting position. Switch sides, and repeat 2X per side.



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Children less than six months need to be sheltered from the sun. Make sure clothes adequately cover their bodies and use car seats and strollers that have sun shades. Get professional advice before using sunscreen on children under six months of age.

Sunscreen Controversies

Recently, there has been a debate surrounding sunscreens and their effectiveness protecting from skin cancer. Some evidence has emerged that increased sunscreen use actually seemed to boost skin cancer rates. But skin specialists assert that it's unlikely to be caused by the ingredients. They point to improper use of sunscreens as the likely problem. Many people do not use enough sunscreen on their skin and don't apply it as frequently as they should. They spend a longer time in the sun, falsely believing they're adequately protected.

Another issue is the lack of government regulations of sunscreens. A published report from the Environmental Working Group (EWG), a non-profit consumer research institute, made some startling allegations after testing a wide variety of sunscreen products. In an EWG press release, the organization states it gives "... low marks to the current crop of sunscreen products, with a few notable exceptions. EWG researchers recommend only 39, or 8 percent, of 500 beach and sport sunscreens on the market this season."¹ The institute's main problems with so many sunscreens are the exaggerated SPF claims and the link between vitamin A use in sunscreens and its possible link to skin tumors. However, other medical experts disagree with the conclusions made by the EWG, claiming the research is flawed.

You can read the EWG's sunscreen report on its website: www.ewg.org.

The Danger of Tanning Beds

Tanning beds have been linked to an increase risk of melanoma, the deadliest form of skin cancer. In a study conducted by the University of Minnesota, researchers discovered that those who frequently used tanning beds were up to three times more likely to develop melanoma. And when the researchers looked at lifestyles of 1, 167 melanoma patients, nearly 2/3 of the patients had used tanning beds.²

Ultimate Sun Protection Methods

Don't rely on sunscreen as your primary way of avoiding sun damage. The best way for you to protect yourself is to practice good common sense. Limit your sun exposure between late morning and mid-afternoon, when the sun's rays are at maximum intensity. (But remember, you can still get sunburned on cloudy days.) Keep in the shade as much as possible. And wear a hat, shirt and sunglasses when out in the sun.



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Quote of the Week

"True enjoyment comes from activity of the mind and exercise of the body; the two are united."

- Alexander von Humboldt

For more health tips, visit online www.citruspie.com



References and Sources:

1. Report: Only 8 Percent of Sunscreens Recommended – Environmental Working Group website, released May 24, 2010 – www.ewg.org
2. Indoor Tanning and Risk of Melanoma: A Case-Control Study in a Highly Exposed Population - *Cancer Epidemiology, Biomarkers & Prevention*, Published Online First May 26, 2010



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