

HEALTH+BEAT



Summer Skin Tips

by Debra Ravasia, MD, FACOG

Skin behaves differently from season to season, and as a practice, skin care routines need some adjustment as well. Summer time brings some unique challenges for skin care. Here are some tips to keep your skin healthy and well during the hot summer season:

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Model: Andreea Enache for YR Models

1. PROTECT YOUR SKIN

The summer sun feels great, but is most direct and can be dangerous. About 1 million new skin cancer cases are diagnosed each year in the United States, and are directly related to sun exposure and damage. Besides its well known skin cancer risk, the sun causes some cosmetic problems, too. Most premature aging is caused by overexposure to the sun. The sun's rays break down the collagen under your skin, making it more prone to wrinkles and sagging, and the blotchy red and brown "age spots" that some people develop are not age spots at all, but really sun damage. While Caucasians have the highest risks for sun damage, skin of all ethnicities can benefit from sun protection from both a cancer reduction and cosmetic point of view.

Choose a sunscreen that blocks both UVA and UVB rays. Over 90 percent of ultraviolet radiation is UVA. While both UVA and UVB cause skin cancers, UVA causes more cosmetic damage to

the underlying skin collagen and thus is responsible for the wrinkling effect of the sun. Tanning booths use primarily UVA. UVA can penetrate windows, while UVB can't. UVB causes burns more often than UVA.

Apply sunscreen at least 30 minutes before heading outdoors. Make sunscreen application to your face a part of your daily routine, before applying any make-up. Many make-ups, particularly mineral make-ups, now contain sunscreens as well, but are not meant to be used instead of a separate sunscreen application. Don't forget to protect your lips, ears, backs of hands, arms and neck. Wear sunscreen even on the cloudy and rainy days.

Use a sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 15. Reapply it every two hours throughout the day and after swimming, exercising or sweating. Get to know your moles and birthmarks and watch them carefully for changes, especially during the summer months. Report any changes to your physician.

2. IF YOU MUST HAVE A TAN...

Times are changing, and tans are becoming passé. There is really no such thing as a "healthy tan." A recent study showed that 53 percent of Americans now prefer a lighter and more healthy, youthful look to skin than the suntanned and often sun-damaged look that has been so popular over the last few decades. But if you must have a tanned look, consider safer alternatives such as spray tanning and mineral bronzers.

3. KEEP HYDRATED

Skin, and all parts of your body in fact, become dehydrated very quickly in the summer heat. Try to drink at least eight, and ideally 10 to 12, glasses of fluids during the day if you are out in the summer heat. Fluids with alcohol and caffeine don't count because they actually have a diuretic effect.

4. SKIN CARE ROUTINES

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Skin tends to become more oily in the summer and humidity increases during our hottest season. Skin generally does better with lighter water-based moisturizers that hold the water content well. Look for hyaluronic acid-based moisturizers, which are good for normal to oily



skin types at any time of year, but great for dry skin as well during the summer. Hyaluronic acid is a naturally occurring substance in the skin, capable of holding 20 times its weight in water.

Exfoliating fruit acids, such as glycolic and lactic acids, and regular cleansing, go a long way to preventing blemishes by removing the dead cells at the skin's surface. Use products with natural ingre-



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dients and free of chemical preservatives. Never use a deodorant soap on your face. Use masks to absorb excess oil and keep pores clean. Regular use of masks, either at home or with your aesthetician, help keep skin more clear and blemish-free during the summer months.

Vitamin A products can make the skin more sun sensitive, so switching to Vitamin C-based products makes sense during the summer. You still get excellent anti-wrinkling and anti-aging benefits, but Vitamin C, as an antioxidant, may give your skin some protection from the sun damage. Bear in mind that it is not intended to replace a good sunscreen, only to complement it.

People who are prone to blotchy pigmentation may benefit from a number of professional skin care treatments and products during the summer to help protect them from these effects. The most effective ones are obtained through physician prescription. Most medical spas carry these products and services, along with many others that can help correct and prevent against sun damage.

If you are on hormones, including the birth control pill, be aware that your skin is probably more sun sensitive and more prone to uneven pigmentation changes with sun exposure, such as melasma. Again, sun protection is important.

Those with acne may want to find alternatives to Acutane, Retin-A and Benzoyl Peroxide if they are planning to spend a significant amount of time outdoors in the summer. All three make the skin very sun sensitive. Alpha hydroxy acids and salicylic acids are great summer time alternatives, but sun protection is still necessary.

So this summer, have fun and enjoy, but be skin savvy and give your skin the attention and tools it needs to keep it healthy and safe. **S**

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