

# Summer Sun Safety

## What You Need to Know

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Are you a sun worshipper? The sun is a necessity. It gives life to most living things on this planet. We need it. In fact, you need it to make vitamin D which boosts your immune system and helps you achieve good mental and physical health.



Yet, it's a mixed bag when it comes to the sun because every minute that you're out in it, you could be exposing yourself to skin damage. In fact, any of those "normal" signs of aging are generally caused by the sun. Over time the sun's UV (ultraviolet) light damages the fibers in your skin. These fibers, aka elastin, break down and your skin begins to sag and stretch more easily.

## Three Ways the Sun Damages Your Skin

### Freckles and brown pigment

Freckles pop up on your skin when the melanocytes become damaged by the sun. Melanocytes produce melanin which helps protect your skin. When they get damaged, they release too much melanin and you get freckles. It's a powerful signal that you're damaging your skin.

### Wrinkles

If freckles aren't enough to motivate you to protect yourself from the sun, what about wrinkles? The damage to the elastin causes your skin to lose its elasticity. It begins to sag. Over time this damage adds up and you'll see wrinkles appearing as you age.

### Visible veins

As the sun damages your skin, the collagen is destroyed. This breakdown causes the thinning and spreading of veins and venules which are the tiny veins. You'll most often notice these tiny red lines on your face including the sides of your nose.

These are certainly unpleasant side effects of sun damage but they're not deadly. However, sun exposure can also cause many different types of cancer including the most dangerous type of skin cancer, melanoma. It's a tumor that begins in the melanocytes in the basal layer of your skin. This is a cancer that can and does kill.

According to the American Cancer Society, more than nine thousand people die from melanoma each year. (<http://www.skincancer.org/skin-cancer-information/skin-cancer-facts>)

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## Three More Ways the Sun Damages Your Skin

Now you know how the sun can damage your skin and make you look older. It can cause wrinkles, visible veins, and freckles and brown pigments. None of these are fun but they're also not deadly. Now let's take a look at three of the more dangerous ways that the sun can damage your skin.

### Benign tumors

The sun can damage the DNA of your skin's cells. This DNA damage can cause the cells to rapidly reproduce. Benign skin tumors range in size and type from a skin tag or a mole to keratosis, angiomas, and fibromas.

### Pre-cancerous lesions

The most common pre-cancer from sun damage is actinic keratosis. It's a scaly growth that often appears on the face, lips, or the back of the hands. It's usually rough and may resemble a wart. Sometimes they're flesh colored but they can become red.

If this type of sun damage is left untreated, it will most likely become a cancer. A precancer happens when the DNA is damaged and the immune system cannot keep the cells under control. It often appears in older people but can show up as early as in your 20s.

### Skin cancer

There are actually several different types of skin cancer depending on the depth of the damage to your skin. You can get basal cell, squamous cell, or melanoma skin cancer. These are caused by DNA damage from the sun's UV light and loss of immune response.

All of this can be quite frightening. The statistics about skin cancer are overwhelming. In fact, more than two million people are diagnosed with skin cancer each year. The good news is that there are steps you can take today to start reducing your risk and to prevent further sun damage. Start wearing sunscreen daily.



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## How to Know if You Have Sun Damage

The “[healthy glow](#)” a look that many men and women around the world strive to attain. We want a sun-kissed look. Yet all that time in the sun can cause damage to your skin. While about 25% of the damage to skin is done before the age of 18, you may still be damaging your skin without realizing it. Let’s take a look at some of the telltale signs of sun damage and then talk about how to reverse it for healthier skin.



### Uneven skin tone

Take a look at your skin in the mirror. Do you see changes in coloration? This can look like freckles, brown spots, or brown pigmentation. You might also have blotchy spots that are yellowish or reddish. These are signs that the sun has damaged the melanocytes or the cells that produce melanin which is designed to help protect your skin.

### Wrinkles and sagging

One unfortunate effect of sun exposure causes what we commonly believe are [signs of normal aging](#). We’re talking about wrinkles and sagging. The sun’s UV light damages the fibers of your skin. Your skin loses its elasticity and the result is aging skin. If you notice fine lines, deeper wrinkles or sagging skin, it’s likely due to sun damage.

### Visible veins

Take a look at the thinner areas of skin on your face, hands, and neck. Do you see any thin red lines? Check the sides of your nose too. When collagen is damaged the tiny veins in your body become more visible.

### New lesions and growths

If you notice any new growths, bumps, or scaly or rough patches, then you not only have sun damage, you may have a cancerous growth. That doesn’t mean the growth is malignant. It does mean that you should have it checked out by a doctor. When caught early, skin cancer can often be stopped in its tracks.

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## I Have Sun Damage, Now What?

You just took a look in the mirror and came to the conclusion that you have sun damage. Now what? What can you do? There are actually many steps you can take depending on the severity of the sun damage and your personal needs and goals.

For example, in some cases you can simply begin to take better care of your skin. Wear sunscreen daily and exfoliate to get rid of the uneven skin tone and to firm up wrinkles. If you have severe sun damage you may want to visit your dermatologist for a treatment program.

Keep reading to learn specific steps that you can take to reverse sun damage and to prevent any future damage.

## Three Ways to Reverse Sun Damage

You've noticed that you have the telltale signs of sun damage. You have discoloration, red lines, wrinkles and maybe even a skin tag or a scaly patch. It's time to take action. Depending on the severity of your sun damage and your personal goals, you can reverse the damage the sun's UV rays have done and you can prevent future damage.

### Exfoliate

Removing the dead skin cells and the top layer of skin can help you regain some of your skin's texture and tightness. It can also even out your skin tone and take steps toward getting rid of discoloration and dry patches. You can choose between at home exfoliation treatments like peels and microdermabrasion. Retin-A and alpha hydroxy acids are topical treatments that help exfoliate and repair skin.

### In-office treatments

Visit your dermatologist for professional microdermabrasion, chemical peels or LED light therapy. The light therapy works to stimulate collagen which can be destroyed by the sun's rays. When collagen is destroyed your skin loses elasticity and you get to enjoy wrinkles and sagging. The LED light therapy stimulates collagen production which can tighten your skin and reverse sun damage.

### Sunscreen

Starting today, begin wearing at least an SPF 30 sunscreen on your face and neck. If you have thinning hair or bald patches, then protect the skin on your head too.

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Keep on reading to learn how to decode sunscreens so you can choose the one that offers you the best protection without making you look like a mimi. No one looks good with white goop on their face and the good news is that you don't have to. You can enjoy the sunshine and protect your skin.

## Sunscreen 101 – How to Choose the Best Sunscreen for Your Skin's Needs

Are you confused by sunscreen? You're not alone. It seems that there are changes every year to labeling and ingredients. It's difficult to know what works to protect and preserve your skin.

The good news is that there is a huge push to get the FDA to permit some sunscreen ingredients that have been successfully used in other countries. These ingredients are said to be safer and more effective than what manufacturers are currently allowed to use. Until then, the following tips and guidelines will help you choose the best sunscreen for your needs.



### Ingredients

When comparing sunscreen ingredients look for either zinc oxide or titanium dioxide. These are currently the safest ingredients on the market and they're the most effective. Avoid products that contain retinyl palmitate (Vitamin A). It's used in a large number of sunscreens so you'll need to check the label. It can cause irritation and is being studied for causing cancer.

Also avoid oxybenzone and octinoxate which are both chemical sunblock and can cause allergic irritation, rashes, and dermatitis in some people. They may also be hormone disruptors.

### Coverage and SPF

Look for an SPF of at least 30. The FDA has noted that anything over a 50 isn't effective at that level so you probably won't find much over 50. An SPF of 30 is a common sun protection factor. Also make sure to look for sunscreens that have broad spectrum coverage. This means they protect you from both UVA and UVB light.

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## Good Sun Habits

In addition to wearing sunscreen, there are some other tips to help you protect your skin.

- Avoid the sun between the hours of 10 am and 2 pm. This is when the sun's rays are the strongest.
- Wear protective clothing including SPF clothing and hats when possible.
- Apply sunscreen before you head outside and reapply often. Apply every two hours if you're swimming or in the water. Apply at least every four hours if you're spending time in the sun.
- Apply a heavy amount of sunscreen to your body. Lay it on thick and give it time to be absorbed before you go outside.

Make sunscreen a part of your daily routine. For women, it can go on over or under makeup, and there are also makeup products that contain a 30 SPF.

Take good care of your skin and it'll take good care of you. Keep reading to learn how your diet can help protect your skin from sun damage.

## Can What You Eat Protect You From Sun Damage?

Did you know that food can help protect your skin from sun damage? There are certain foods that contain chemical compounds which not only protect your skin when you're out in the sun but they can also repair your skin and reverse sun damage. The good news is that the foods we're about to share with you are tasty too.



**Cherries** - Cherries are a good source of melatonin which is an antioxidant and a chemical that helps protect your skin against UV rays. The Montmorency cherry has the highest level of melatonin. Ingredients in cherries have also been shown to repair sunburned skin by stimulating new skin cells to grow. They're high in vitamin C too, which is a building block of collagen, nature's wrinkle preventer.



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**Tomatoes** - Lycopene is the helpful ingredient in tomatoes and it is highest in heirloom tomatoes. This antioxidant has been shown to reduce UV-induced free radicals by half.

**Watermelon** - This tasty summertime fruit is also quite high in lycopene.

**Crimini mushrooms** - These lovely little mushrooms are high in selenium and vitamin B. Selenium is required to make the antioxidant glutathione peroxidase, which fights free radicals that are created in your skin when it's exposed to the sun.

**Green tea** - Green tea, hot or iced, contains high levels of epigallocatechin-3-gallate (EGCG). This is an antioxidant that fights inflammation in the skin and reduces free radicals.

**Peppers** - Sweet or hot, the capsiate in peppers decreases UVB-induced skin damage and fights inflammation from sun damage.

**Pomegranate** - Pomegranates contain polyphenols that protect your skin from UVA and UVB free radicals. Pomegranates have also been shown to boost the SPF of your sunscreen by up to 25%.

**Salmon** - The omega-3 fats in salmon fight inflammation from UVB rays. They also block the enzymes that are released by UV light and cause collagen depletion.

**Carrots** - The antioxidant beta carotene found in carrots protects and repairs cells with sun damage.

**Sweet potatoes** - These lovely tubers are also high in beta carotene.

[Add one or more of these foods](#) to your daily diet during the long days of summer and help keep your skin beautiful and healthy. They're all easy to find and delicious. Next we'll take a look at some of the commonly held beliefs about sun damage and explore what's true and what's a myth.

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## Three Sun Damage Myths

When it comes to the sun and what it can do to our skin, there are a lot of myths. Let's get right down to it and start debunking some of the most common myths.

### A Base Tan Protects My Skin from the Sun

What do you think? Do you think this is true or false? It'd be great if it were true. Unfortunately, it isn't and every minute you spend in the sun with unprotected skin, you're doing damage to your skin. It doesn't matter if you have the darkest tan ever - if the color is new to you, it is sun damage.

Now it is true that if you have a darker complexion that you're less likely to get sun damage because you have more melanin in your skin which serves as protection. It doesn't mean you can't get sun damage, though, so sunscreen and good habits are still important.

### Most Sun Damage Occurs before Age 18

This just isn't true at all. The simple reason is that the math doesn't add up. You're outside at every age and exposing your skin to the sun. It's possible that you were outside more when you were younger. However, experts tell us that we only get about 25% of our total sun damage and exposure before age 18. It's important to wear sunscreen at every age.

### SPF 15 Is Enough

An SPF of 15 is better than nothing. It protects you against 93% of the sun's harmful UV rays and only lets 7% of harmful rays get through. But, a SPF of 30 protects against 97% of the sun's harmful UV rays which means that it only lets 3% of harmful rays through. This makes SPF 30 a much better choice.

When it comes to protecting your skin from the sun it's important to know the truth. A base tan doesn't protect you. Any tan or burn is damage to your skin. The best protection is to wear sunscreen whenever you go out into the sun, even when it's cloudy.

Next we'll take a look at the risks of skin cancer so you can know how to better protect yourself. Some people are more at risk than others for developing skin cancer.

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## Are You at Risk for Skin Cancer?

You've heard the saying, "Knowledge is power", right? In this case it couldn't be truer. Some people are more at risk for developing skin cancer than others. If you're in a high risk group then it's essential that you take steps to protect yourself and your skin from the sun's damaging UV rays.



## What's Your Skin Type?

Certain skin types are more susceptible to sun damage and skin cancer. There are six different skin types. Let's look at a brief description of each.

**Skin Type 1** - If you have light blue, light gray or light green eyes and red or pale blonde hair, you're probably in this skin type. Your skin is ivory or very fair and you may have a lot of freckles. Your skin always burns when it is exposed to the sun and often blisters and peels. You're at a high risk of skin cancer and need to take daily precautions to protect your skin from the sun.

**Skin Type 2** - This skin type is also fair. You have blue eyes and generally burn before you tan. You may have a few freckles and blonde hair. While not as susceptible to skin cancer as Type 1, this skin type is still at a high risk.

**Skin Type 3** - This skin type has a dark blonde or light brown hair. You might have green or brown eyes and your skin is fair to beige, with golden undertones. You may burn and tan and may have a few freckles. You're also susceptible to skin cancer and should wear sunscreen every day.

**Type 4-6** - Now we're moving into the olive, light brown, dark brown or black skin. You have brown eyes and brown or black hair and often tan and occasionally burn. Sunscreen is still important and there are certain types of melanomas can occur in this population.

### Beyond Skin Types

Aside from skin tone, other factors can also affect your risk of damage from UV light. You need to be especially careful in the sun if you:

- Had skin cancer before or have a family history of skin cancer

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- Live or vacation at high altitudes
- Spend a lot of time outside and get a daily sun exposure
- Have an autoimmune diseases or a weakened immune system
- Take medicines that lower or suppress your immune system (try these [natural remedies](#) instead.)
- Take medicines that make your skin more sensitive to sunlight

Whether you're in a high risk group or you have very little risk, it's important to both protect yourself from the sun by wearing sunscreen and to check your skin for changes.

## Five Symptoms of Skin Cancer

Could you recognize skin cancer if you saw it? Skin cancer is on the rise and it's important to be able to identify the signs and symptoms. The first step is to get an overall baseline of your skin. Explore all of the areas of your skin and pay attention to the bumps, moles, and freckles. You might get someone to help you or get your body mapped at the dermatologist. Once you have a baseline, it's time to learn your ABCDE's.

**A – Asymmetry** - Take a look at your moles and any discolored patches. If you drew a line down the middle, would both sides be the same? If not, that's a sign that the mole is asymmetrical. Skin cancers are typically asymmetrical and this could be a sign.

**B – Border** - What does the border of the mole look like? Is it even or jagged or scalloped? Even borders are ideal. If the border is uneven then that's a sign it may be cancer.

**C – Color** - What color is the skin in the affected area? Is it one color or many colors? One solid brown color is great. If it is many different brown or black colors then that's a sign of cancer. Melanomas can also be red or blue.

**D – Diameter** - Is the mole or affected area larger than the head of a pencil eraser? Melanomas are generally larger in diameter than the size of an eraser, which is generally about 1/4 inch.

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**E – Evolving** - Is the mole changing? Is it growing, changing color, becoming raised, or is the skin around the mole changing? Sometimes E stands for elevation which means the area of skin is rising. It may change from a flat discoloration to a bump or it may change so that it contains several smaller bumps that are clumped together. This type of change in your skin isn't normal.

If you notice any of these signs, it's important to go to the doctor to have your skin examined. In the vast majority of cases when skin cancer is caught early, it can be taken care of. Keep reading to learn the most powerful ways to prevent skin cancer and sun damage.

## Five Ways to Prevent Skin Cancer and Sun Damage

Skin cancer, wrinkles, age spots, and sagging skin - no one wants any of these. Every minute you spend in the sun [damages and ages your skin](#). Sometimes this damage results in wrinkles and pigmentation. Other times it takes a more extreme turn and results in cancer. Whether you want to stop the clock, prevent cancer, or both, there are some powerful steps you can take to protect yourself and your skin.



### Cover Up

Between the hours of ten and two, try to stay out of the sun as much as possible. This is the time when the sun is most intense and can cause the most damage. If you do have to be out in the sun during this time of day, wear a hat to protect your face. Wear loose-fitting clothing that also covers your arms and legs.

### Sunscreen Every Day

It cannot be stressed enough. Wear sunscreen. Wear an SPF of at least 30 and make it part of your daily routine. If you're going to be working or playing outside, make sure to reapply your sunscreen every couple of hours. Apply it liberally to all exposed areas. In fact, most clothing only protects your skin against about 7% of the sun's UV rays. You can get burnt under your clothing. Applying sunscreen to your entire body is always a good extra step.



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## Eat a Healthy Diet

Some foods help protect your skin against the sun's damage. Antioxidants help reverse sun damage and certain elements help strengthen your immune system. Eat a diet rich in whole foods with an abundance of [vegetables](#) and fruits.

## Beware of the Surprise Areas

Some areas of your body are more susceptible to sun damage and cancer. They include the tops of your ears and your nose. The underside of your nose can get burnt in the middle of winter if the sun is shining and reflecting up from the snow. The tops of your feet and your toes are also vulnerable. Use sunscreen and cover up.

## Guard Your Health

Your immune system plays a very important role in the prevention of cancer. Take good care of your health. Exercise. Get enough sleep and stay hydrated ([try this cucumber, lemon & mint infused water.](#)) Eat healthy and practice good hand washing technique as well. The stronger your immune system, the better your body will be able to handle DNA damage from the sun's UV rays.

The sun is a lovely ball of fire that gives us life, improves our mood, and makes each day brighter and more beautiful. It's part of your life and a welcomed part most likely. You don't need to be afraid of the sun. However, you do want to take care to protect your skin and your health. If you want to get that summer glow then invest in a [good self-tanner](#). These simple tips will help you slow down the aging of your skin and help reduce your risk of skin cancer.

Learn more about sun safety and other useful tips at [ImLovingThis.com](http://ImLovingThis.com)



## You also might be interested in reading:

- > [Quick Fixes for Self-Tanning Mistakes](#)
- > [How To Get the Beach Body YOU Deserve!](#)
- > [What to Eat and Drink at a Pool Party so You Won't Be Left Feeling Bloating](#)