



SNEAKY TIPS TO KEEP YOUR SKIN SAFE FROM THE SUN

Ultraviolet (UV) rays from the sun and tanning beds are the leading cause of skin cancer, with an estimated 5.4 million cases being diagnosed in the U.S. every year.⁽¹⁾ You're probably well aware of the sun safety basics that can help lower your risk of skin cancer: wearing sunscreen, hats, and protective clothing, and seeking shade or avoiding the sun during peak afternoon hours. But, after all these measures, is there anything else you can do to lower your risk? Surprisingly, the answer is yes, and it's a lot easier than you may think. Here's a look at some "sneaky" strategies that can help protect your skin from damaging UV rays.

Check your smartphone. Yes, your phone is a handy tool to stay sun smart. Simply check the weather app on your phone (this is a standard app on most phones) to look up the UV index. The UV scale goes from 0 to 11+ (0 being low and 11 being extreme) and can give you an idea of how cautious you should be about sun exposure each day. If the index is on the

higher side, avoid the sun or slather on the sunscreen and try to seek shade.

Fuel up with these foods. UV light depletes antioxidants, which are chemicals that help keep your cells healthy. Fortunately, you can replenish these antioxidants with smart food choices. Indeed, antioxidants found in specific foods can help protect your skin from sun damage.

Here are a few foods that pack a powerful antioxidant punch:

» **Orange-hued fruits and veggies like carrots, squash, sweet potatoes, cantaloupe, apricots, and mangoes.** These foods contain beta carotene which is a nutrient that can give you certain health benefits by converting to vitamin A in the body. One scientific meta-analysis found that beta carotene provided natural sun protection after 10 weeks of regular consumption.⁽²⁾

» **Red-pigmented foods like tomatoes, watermelon, guava, papaya, and pink grapefruit.** These foods include lycopene, an antioxidant that has been linked to a lower risk of various cancers. Moreover, a 2010 study in the British Journal of Dermatology tracked patients regularly eating tomato paste against a control group that didn't and found that after 10 weeks the lycopene eaters were 40 percent less likely to be sunburned.⁽³⁾

» **Fatty fish such as salmon, sardines, mackerel, herring, and albacore tuna.** They are loaded with omega-3s which are chemicals that have been linked to reducing inflammation. Several cancers, including skin cancer, have been strongly linked to chronic inflammation. Walnuts and flaxseed are good vegetarian sources of omega-3s as well.

» **Green leafy veggies like kale and spinach and herbs like basil, parsley, sage, and rosemary.** These foods are loaded with antioxidants. In particular, leafy greens are high in the antioxidants lutein and zeaxanthin

⁽¹⁾ <https://www.cancer.org/cancer/basal-and-squamous-cell-skin-cancer/about/key-statistics.html> ⁽²⁾ <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1751-1097.2007.00253.x>

⁽³⁾ <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/20854436/>

which some research has found to protect against wrinkling, sun damage, and even skin cancer.⁽⁴⁾

Enjoy your cup of joe. According to a study published in the Journal of the National Cancer Institute, people who drank four or more cups of coffee daily were 20 percent less likely to develop malignant melanoma (the most serious form of skin cancer) than non-coffee drinkers.⁽⁵⁾

Perform regular self-exams. Experts recommend that you see a dermatologist once a year, or more often if you are at a higher risk of skin cancer, for a full-body, professional skin exam. But you should also perform a self-exam every month. Check your skin for any new, changing, or unusual spots. Take pictures of these spots and show them to your dermatologist during your appointment.

And remember! None of these strategies are a replacement for sunscreen and other safety strategies like wearing protective gear. These are strategies you can implement alongside tried-and-true sun safety measures. Here's to a fun, safe, and healthy summer!

Ask the Expert...

Is sunscreen safe?

A recent study caused some concern because it showed that some sunscreen ingredients can be absorbed into your bloodstream. This is a topic that still requires more study and investigation. However, experts agree that the negative effects of sun exposure—skin cancer and premature skin aging are very well known. Sunscreen is one of the most effective ways to protect your skin from these effects and there's no conclusive evidence to prove it's harmful. Continue to wear sunscreen when you're outdoors.

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SUNSCREEN CAN SAVE LIVES

Regular daily use of an SPF 15 or higher sunscreen reduces the risk of developing melanoma by 50%.⁽⁶⁾



⁽⁴⁾ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3257702/> ⁽⁵⁾ https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/health-science/regular-coffee-drinking-may-block-the-worst-skin-cancer-a-study-shows/2015/01/27/b80e4454-a24f-11e4-b146-577832eafcb4_story.html ⁽⁶⁾ Green AC, Williams GM, Logan V, Skelton GM. Reduced melanoma after regular sunscreen use: randomized trial follow-up. J Clin Oncol 2011; 29(3):257-263