

August 2013

August: Skin Health— Treatment and Prevention

The Skinny on Skin

The skin is your body's largest organ. It protects you against bacteria, viruses, dirt, wind, heat and cold. And it serves as a "window" to the body, alerting doctors when something is wrong. Your skin needs a steady supply of new cells to protect the organs against infection, the elements and other invaders. New skin cells, manufactured in the epidermis, migrate to the outer layer of skin.

Your skin also regulates heat. Blood vessels in the skin widen when it's hot, evaporating perspiration and cooling the body. They narrow when your body is cold, reducing the amount of heat you lose through your body's largest organ. Your skin is really made up of three distinct layers: the epidermis, the dermis and subcutaneous tissue.

Epidermis: Highly specialized cells here produce substances called keratin and melanin. Keratin covers the skin with a paper-thin layer that's the body's first defense against invaders. Melanin gives skin its pigment, or color, to help protect us against the sun's ultraviolet (UV) rays.

Dermis: This second layer is elastic and fibrous, holding a network of blood vessels that feed and support other layers of skin, hair, nails, sweat glands and nerves.

Subcutaneous tissue: This deepest level is composed primarily of fat that the body uses as a cushion. A network of blood vessels and nerves runs through this layer below the epidermis and dermis.

Protecting your skin

The best way to keep your skin healthy is to protect it when you're outdoors. Wear a sunscreen with an SPF of at least 15 that protects against both UVA and UVB rays, a hat with a brim and protective clothing, says the American Academy of Dermatology (AAD). Limit your time in the sun, particularly between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. Even with the best protection, however, our skin changes as we grow older. It becomes drier and more wrinkled. It loses its ability to stretch, and becomes thinner and less plump looking. Gravity also weighs in, dragging skin downward and causing it to sag.

Dry skin that flakes and itches can be treated with a moisturizer just after a bath or shower, while your skin is still damp, says the AAD. And even sun-damaged skin can benefit from a layer of sunscreen whenever you venture outside.

Source: Health Ink & Vitality Communications
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Health Tip: Apply Sunscreen Properly

Sunscreen can help you avoid the harmful effects of the sun's ultraviolet rays, but the product must be applied properly to be effective.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention offers these guidelines:

- Lather your skin with sunscreen about 30 minutes before you go outside, and always reapply after you swim or sweat heavily.
- If you spend a lot of time outdoors, reapply sunscreen several times throughout the day.
- Thoroughly shake the bottle before applying.
- Apply a thick, thorough layer of sunscreen, and don't scrimp.
- Don't forget to use sunscreen on your ears, shoulders, back and the backs of your knees and legs.
- Don't get sunscreen in your eyes.

Source: HealthDay
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A Strategy for Scars

You may think they're unsightly, but scars serve a purpose. They show that your body has repaired a wound. But while you're healing, you can help lessen scarring.

Scars form after an injury, surgery, or lengthy chronic disease such as acne. Scars begin to form when your body makes extra collagen to seal a wound. Fibers of the protein collagen normally strengthen the layer of skin that lies just beneath the surface. But the extra collagen at a wound is thicker than usual, and that thickness causes the scar.

Over time, the body replaces the thick collagen with normal collagen, so the scar may fade and even vanish. Usually, though, some scarring remains. To reduce scarring, AAD member Christopher Harmon, M.D., a dermatology instructor at the University of Alabama in Birmingham, suggests you:

- Massage the area for three to four weeks after your injury or surgery, four times a day for five minutes. Wait until new skin has grown across the wound. "This will break up the collagen being formed and help accelerate healing," Dr. Harmon says.
- Keep the scar out of the sun. Ultraviolet rays can darken your scar, making it more noticeable.

If a scar troubles you, ask your doctor about removal options that include surgical and nonsurgical treatments.

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Itchy, Scaly Skin? Living With Psoriasis

The thick, red, scaly skin of psoriasis can be not only painful but also embarrassing. You may have it or know someone who does. Psoriasis affects more than 3% of the U.S. population. August is Psoriasis Awareness Month. It's a good time to learn about this uncomfortable illness.

Most people get psoriasis on their elbows, knees, scalp, back, face, palms and feet. It can show up on other parts of the body, too, including fingernails, toenails, genitals and inside the mouth. Besides being uncomfortable, these patches of skin can make you self-conscious about the way you look. "Psoriasis can be socially isolating for many people," says Dr. Joel Gelfand, a psoriasis researcher at the University of Pennsylvania. "Often, people can become depressed."

Psoriasis is not a disease you can catch from others. It's caused by an overactive immune system. The immune system essentially raises false alarms, which lead to inflammation and a rapid turnover of skin cells. Normally, skin cells take about a month to grow deep in your skin and then rise to the surface. In psoriasis, the cells rise in a matter of days, before they have a chance to mature. The new cells and existing cells all pile up on the surface of the skin. The result is redness, irritation and discomfort. Unfortunately, psoriasis can affect more than just the skin. It causes some people to have swollen joints and arthritis. Studies have also linked psoriasis to higher risks for diabetes, obesity, abnormal cholesterol, strokes and heart attacks. "For these reasons, it's especially important for psoriasis patients to get their blood pressure checked, quit smoking if they smoke and maintain a healthy body weight," Gelfand says.

Symptoms of psoriasis can come and go. There are several forms of psoriasis—each with a distinctive appearance—and some people have more severe cases than others. Anyone with psoriasis should pay attention to stress, dry skin, infections and certain medications, as these factors could make the condition worse. Your doctor can give you some guidance.

The good news, says Gelfand, is that the past decade has brought about more treatments for psoriasis than ever before. Doctors now have many more options to help their patients manage and cope with the disorder.

Source: *NIH News in Health*
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National Institutes of Health
<http://newsinhealth.nih.gov/issue/aug2010/feature2>

The American Academy of Dermatology: A Great Site for Information about Skin

Want more information on keeping your skin healthy? The American Academy of Dermatology is full of great resources on all sorts of topics related to the skin such as:

- How to prevent skin cancer
- Find a free skin cancer screening
- Learn the facts about sunscreen
- Tips for treating and preventing poison ivy
- Tips for managing hair loss
- Pinning down the cause of nail problems

Navigate to the hyperlink below to learn more.

American Academy of Dermatology <http://www.aad.org/for-the-public/home>

Source: Copyright © November 2012

Healthy Recipe: Asian-Style Steamed Salmon

Ingredients:

- 1 C low-sodium chicken broth
- ½ C shiitake mushroom caps, rinsed and sliced (or substitute dried shiitake mushrooms)
- 2 Tbsp fresh ginger, minced (or 2 tsp ground)
- ¼ C scallions (green onions), rinsed and chopped
- 1 Tbsp lite soy sauce
- 1 Tbsp sesame oil (optional)
- 12 oz salmon fillet, cut into 4 portions (3 oz each)

Instructions:

Combine chicken broth, mushroom caps, ginger, scallions, soy sauce, and sesame oil (optional) in a large, shallow sauté pan. Bring to a boil over high heat, then lower heat and simmer for 2–3 minutes. Add salmon fillets, and cover with a tight-fitting lid. Cook gently over low heat for 4–5 minutes or until the salmon flakes easily with a fork in the thickest part (to a minimum internal temperature of 145 F). Serve one piece of salmon with ¼ cup of broth.

of Servings: 4 servings

Cook Time: 10 minutes

Amount Per Serving: 3 oz salmon, ¼ C broth

Calories 175	Carbohydrate 4 g
Sodium 208 mg	Protein 19 g
Fiber 1 g	Cholesterol 48 g
Potassium 487 mg	Fat: 2 g

Source: National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute
<http://hp2010.nhlbi.nih.net/healthyeating/recipe/detail.aspx?cId=0&rId=37>