

Safe Fun in the Sun

Nutrition Offers UV Shield

Sharron Leonard

Because sunlight activates the synthesis of vitamin D, a nutrient that works with vitamin A to build strong bones and good eyesight it is essential for health. Furthermore, bright light, specifically sunshine, can improve your mood and help ward off depression. But all things in moderation. Overexposure to UV rays can cause potentially extensive damage to the skin, an all-too-common occurrence. "Skin cancer is now considered epidemic throughout the nation", according to The Centers for Disease Control Prevention. "Over one million residents in the United States are expected to get skin cancer this year more people than the collective total of all who will get cancers of the breast, prostate, lung and colon. Exposure to

toxic molecules. These are known as free radicals and can lead to malignancies. Sunscreen, adequate coverage and sunglasses have long been recommended to avoid this damage, but diverse studies now suggest some promising supplemental strategies for UV protection from the inside out. Certain nutrients and a low-fat diet have shown specific anti-cancer properties.

Free Radical Control

Antioxidants have long been known to neutralize free radicals and render them inactive, protecting cellular structure. Powerful antioxidants include vitamin C (citrus fruits, strawberries, broccoli, tomatoes), vitamin E (asparagus, raw

*Give me
Beauty in the
inward soul;
may the
outward and
the inward be
as one.*

-Socrates

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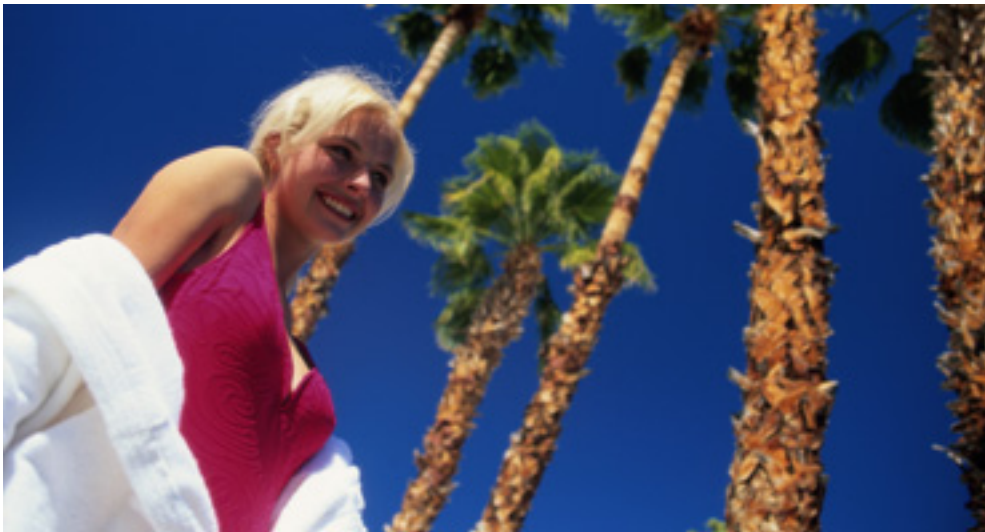
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UV rays cause oxidative damage and can actually change the skin's DNA.

ultraviolet (UV) rays in sunlight causes 90 percent of the skin cancer cases." And this overexposure may double the risk of melanoma, a type of skin cancer that causes more than 80 percent of skin cancer deaths.

UV rays cause oxidative damage and can actually change the skin's DNA cellular structure, creating highly unstable and

nuts and seeds, spinach), beta-carotene (yellow and orange vegetables) as well as the minerals zinc (shell fish, legumes, whole-grain foods) and selenium (nuts, whole-wheat bread, oatmeal). A recent study published in the Journal of Investigative Dermatology demonstrates that lutein and zeaxanthin, plant

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pigments found in predominately green leafy vegetables, also have strong antioxidant properties that diminish the effects of UV irradiation by reducing the acute inflammatory responses. Lutein- and zeaxanthin-rich foods include green, leafy vegetables such as spinach, kale, broccoli and turnips as well as corn and egg yolks.

As long ago as 1991, studies have shown green tea consumption and topical application afford protection against skin tumors. More recent research corroborates these results and points to the polyphenols in green tea, which contain antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties. In addition, one major element in green tea, epigallocatechin-3-gallate (EGCG), is thought to stop production of an enzyme required for cancer cell growth. Several cups of green tea might be a worthwhile addition to your daily routine.

Avoiding fatty foods may also provide benefit. Studies suggest that a low-fat diet can reduce the incidence of premalignant lesions called actinic keratosis. To maintain a low-fat diet, the U.S. Department of Agriculture recommends that you get most of your calories from organic, whole foods such as grains, fruits, and vegetables and to avoid foods high in saturated fats. For more information, visit the website www.health.gov/dietaryguidelines/.

Know the Index

Even though it is helpful to counteract damage to your skin through nutrition, it remains vital to shield yourself from the sun's invisible UV rays and avoid them when they're at their most intense. The UV Index, a measurement of ultra-violet sun radiation, can assist in protecting you from potentially harmful exposure. This forecast of UV intensity ranges from a nighttime low of 0 to a very sunny 10-plus. It is greatest when the sun hits its apex (noon), then rapidly decreases as the sun moves across the afternoon sky. The higher the UV Index, the shorter the time for skin damage to occur. To determine the UV Index in your area, check your local newspaper, TV and radio news broadcasts, or you can visit www.epa.gov/sunwise/uvindex.html, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's website. This rating allows you

to determine your geographic risk and, in turn, the level of adequate sun protection needed.

Regardless of your sun-screening defenses, always be vigilant about checking your skin for possible signs of melanoma. "When melanoma is detected in its early stage, surgical removal cures the disease in most cases," according to the American Academy of Dermatology. "If the disease has spread to lymph nodes, the 5-year survival rate is 30-40 percent. If the disease has spread to distant organs, the 5-year survival rate is 12 percent."

Melanoma appears as a pre-existing mole that changes, or as a new mole on previously unaffected/clear skin. Performing skin self-exams every few months and knowing the characteristics to look for in any mole identified will enhance early detection and reduce risk.

For more information on early detection, visit www.skincancer.org.

And don't forget common sense practices:

--Avoid long-term sun exposure and wear a hat, sunglasses, and protective clothing.

--Apply sunscreen with SPF of 30 or above.

--Avoid artificial tanning devices.

--And be aware of sun exposure year-round.

With a few protective measures, you can continue to enjoy fun in the sun safely. Wear your sunscreen--in the winter months as well as the summer--seek shade, cover up with sleeves and pants, and don't forget your hat!



A colorful diet can help provide sun protection from the inside out.

Cultivating a Gardening Habit

Discover the Health Benefits of Yard Work

Feeling the need to exercise, clean up your diet, meditate? Want to be more creative, get out and meet people, enjoy the outdoors, and slow down? There's one activity in which you can accomplish all of these objectives: gardening.

ENCOURAGING EXERCISE

Studies show that vigorous digging burns 500 calories an hour, weeding burns 210 calories, and mowing the lawn burns 400 calories. As a moderate exercise, gardening has been found to decrease the risk of heart disease and diabetes, and a study at the University of Arkansas found that gardening was almost as effective as weight lifting in reducing the risk for osteoporosis in women. So instead of taking that indoor aerobics class this summer, try mowing the lawn or planting an herb garden.

As with any exercise regimen, the key is to start at a comfortable pace and gradually work your way up to longer, more difficult activities. Your heart rate should be about the same as when you take a brisk walk.

IMPROVING YOUR DIET

Gardening will also likely help you eat better. Research shows that people who grow gardens eat more vegetables and fruits than those who don't. Growing fresh herbs, even in a container on the deck or balcony, is another great way to add flavor and freshness to home-cooked meals and an incentive to try new recipes.

BOOSTING YOUR SOCIAL LIFE

Gardening can also be quite social. Whether at a garden club, a community garden, or an online forum, people love to share ideas, solve common problems, and connect through mutual interests.

EASING STRESS

And finally, gardening is a great way to manage stress. Spending time outside and tuning in to the rhythms of nature, we're reminded to be patient, slow down, and breathe the fresh air. Whether growing flowers, vegetables, or herbs, a garden reminds us of our connection to life and the abundance that nature so freely gives.



Gardening burns calories and improves diet.

Yogurt, the Super Food

Balance Digestion, Improve Immunity, and Prevent Disease

In some form, yogurt has existed since at least 2000 BCE, and many food historians believe it predates recorded history, possibly going back as far as 9000 BCE. Why such staying power? A bit of a wonder food, yogurt improves digestion, which can boost immunity and even help prevent colon cancer. One dairy product even most lactose intolerant people can eat, yogurt is loaded with active bacterial cultures, the key ingredients that make it so healthy.

While we typically think of bacteria as dangerous bugs that cause disease and infection, the body is host to billions of bacteria that live in the intestines and help digest the foods we eat. These good bacteria, or microflora, actually fight off the bad bacteria that cause illness.

Some of these same good bacterial species are used to ferment milk, and it's these cultures that give yogurt its texture and tart flavor. They also process much of the milk sugar, called lactose, during fermentation, which is why yogurt usually doesn't bother people with lactose intolerance.

Eating yogurt helps maintain the microflora in the gut, optimizing digestion and keeping harmful bacteria in check. Ever noticed how a course of antibiotics is often followed by a bout of diarrhea? This is because antibiotics kill off all the bacteria in the gut--the bad stuff and the good--leaving the gastrointestinal tract compromised. Fortunately, yogurt can help counteract this imbalance.

Furthermore, this food is a good source of nutrients, including B vitamins, calcium, magnesium, and phosphorus. Whole milk yogurt also contains conjugated linoleic acid (CLA), an essential fatty acid with cancer fighting properties, especially beneficial in preventing breast and colon cancers. And CLA has been shown to increase fat metabolism, helping the body convert fat to lean muscle.

Maintaining the good bacteria in the gastrointestinal tract is key to healthy digestion, and eating quality yogurt is a great way to do this. Be sure to read the labels and choose varieties that contain live active cultures to ensure you're getting the most from your yogurt.

*The ideas that
have lighted my
way, have given
me new courage
to face life
cheerfully, have
been Kindness,
Beauty, and
Truth.*

-Albert Einstien

Age spots (liver spots) are flat brown spots that mostly appear on the face, neck, and hands. These brown spots in themselves are harmless, but it can be a sign of more serious underlying problems. These spots are actually signs that the cells are full of the type of accumulated wastes that slowly destroy the body's cells, including brain and liver cells. In other words, age spots is a surface sign of free radical intoxication of the body that may affect many internal structures as well, including the heart muscle.

Factors leading to age spots include: Poor diet, lack of exercise, smoking, poor liver function, EXCESSIVE SUN EXPOSURE, that causes the development of free radicals that may damage the skin. Chemical peels are recommended, and Limit sun exposure! Do not use cleansing creams, especially hydrogenated, and hardened creams.

This has worked for some people: 1) At night, saturate a cotton ball with pure lemon juice and put it over the spots. There may be some tingling, but only for a few minutes. If there is no sign of irritation, apply morning and night. 2) Cleanse your skin with pure olive oil and a warm wet washcloth, then rinse with lemon juice and water.

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