



Skin Sense

As the sultry days of summer stretch ahead, we bare arms and legs to adjust to the heat and humidity. For most busy executives, skin care is an afterthought, often just a slathering of sunscreen before a day of golf, tennis, or boating. Yet skin is our largest organ, covering between 12 to 20 square feet and accounting for nearly 12 to 16 percent of our body weight.

Skin is comprised of three layers; the top layer or epidermis, the middle layer or dermis, and the bottom layer or subcutis. Each layer has a critical role – doing everything from acting as a barrier to provide protection from microorganisms while being permeable enough to enable an exchange of warmth, air and fluids. The skin is also our sensory organ with numerous nerve endings to detect warmth, cold, and touch. Skin even shows emotions - goose bumps or pale skin show fear while embarrassment can create a pink blush.

"Your skin is the fingerprint of what is going on inside your body, and all skin conditions, from psoriasis to acne to aging, are the manifestations of your body's internal needs, including its nutritional needs," says Georgiana Donadio, PhD, DC, MSc, founder and director of the National Institute of Whole Health in Boston.

When it comes to skin's outer beauty, sun exposure causes most of the skin changes that we generally attribute as a normal part of aging. Over time the sun's ultraviolet (UV) light damages the elastin fibers in the skin. As these fibers break down, the skin begins to sag and loses its ability to go back into place after stretching. Although skin replaces itself generally within 27 days, sun damage permeates skin deeply enough to cause skin to bruise and tear more easily as well as take longer to heal.

Of course, excessive sun can also damage skin enough to cause melanoma or skin cancer. While everyone is susceptible, cancer risk is highest for people with fair or freckled skin, light eyes and blond or red hair. Other risk factors include having a family or personal history of skin cancer, working outside or even living in sunny surroundings. A history of severe sunburns and an abundance of large and irregularly-shaped moles are also risk factors unique to skin cancer.



So how can you better protect a critical organ that does so much? Health experts indicate that vitamins and minerals in all forms play a key role in a healthy and radiant complexion, whether the source is food, supplements, or lotions. Most experts find that the vitamins C, E, A, K, and B complex all help improve skin health and appearance.

"There is a lot of important new research showing tremendous power of antioxidants in general, and in some specific nutrients in particular that can make an important difference in the way your skin looks and feels -- and even in how well it ages," says nutritional supplement expert Mary Sullivan, RN, co-founder of Olympian Labs. "When combined with a good diet, the right dietary supplements can help keep your skin looking not only healthy, but also years younger."

Annual skin checks with your doctor at Executive MD are an important health maintenance routine. If you haven't scheduled time with your doctor, call today for a full review.

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