

Circle of Health Wellness Center

June 2011

Member, Associated Bodywork & Massage Professionals

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

"And what is so rare as a day in June? Then, if ever, come perfect days"

-James R Lowell



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.

A Walking Workout

Have Fun While Burning More Calories

Imagine the lone hiker, backpack laden with sleeping bag and bedroll, wielding a well-worn walking stick as she climbs the side of a snow-covered mountain. For centuries, trekkers have used walking sticks, partly as a defense against attacking wildlife, partly to aid in balance, and partly as support on long, arduous climbs. But in recent years, many hikers have replaced the single wooden walking stick with hiking poles.

Held in both hands and used to distribute weight more evenly through the four limbs, wilderness hikers have found poles invaluable for safety, efficiency, and comfort on long hikes. What wilderness hikers have known for some time now is that walking poles are a great way to relieve pressure on knees, ankles, and the back. They encourage better posture and provide a total body workout by engaging the upper body.

Now, hiking poles are showing up in urban areas as fitness walkers discover the benefits they provide. Nordic walking--similar in technique to cross-

country skiing--is a great way to get a whole body workout, increase oxygen consumption, and burn more calories than regular walking or even speed walking. This total body workout burns 40 percent more calories and consumes 25 percent more oxygen. Poles can be purchased at most outdoor sporting stores, along with rubber tips for use on paved paths.

TECHNIQUE

Adjust your poles to approximately 70 percent of your height and loosely secure the straps around your wrists. Hold the poles at an angle behind you so they propel you forward with a slight bend at the elbow. Use an opposite hand-and-heel motion as you walk--right heel strikes as left pole tip contacts the ground. And you're on your way! Don't be shy with your poles. Remember: You're burning 40 percent more calories.

For more information, visit www.walking.about.com/od/nordicwalking/index.htm.



Add walking poles, and burn more calories.

The Sunshine Vitamin

Shelley Burns

In the world of skin health, we focus on ways to improve skin quality. We work to prevent acne, cellular damage, dryness, and wrinkles. It is less common to discuss how a skin-care strategy may increase risk of developing other health conditions.

Skin cancer is one example. To prevent skin cancer, we protect ourselves with sunscreen--especially during the summer months. But by using sunscreen we are blocking the absorption of vitamin D, the "sunshine" vitamin.

Vitamin D is fat soluble and contains powerful antioxidant and anticarcinogenic properties that can prevent premature aging and cellular damage. Solid research indicates that

vitamin D plays a role in reducing the risk of cancer, specifically breast, colon, and prostate cancers. Vitamin D has been associated with preventing diabetes by reducing insulin sensitivity. It also improves heart health, reduces the risk of multiple sclerosis, strengthens bones, and decreases the effects of seasonal affective disorder.

Vitamin D can help resolve skin conditions like psoriasis, as it plays a role in skin cell regulation, including cell turnover and growth. Vitamin D can be effective in reducing the itching and flaking associated with this disorder. Ultraviolet B (UVB) treatments have long been used successfully in treating psoriasis because UVB produces vitamin D in the body.

Getting between 5-10 minutes of direct sun exposure daily on the arms, face, hands, and back (without sunscreen) can provide enough vitamin D to meet your daily requirements, though sun exposure does present a risk. Because it is difficult to obtain enough vitamin D through food, many prefer to use supplements. Research on the health benefits of ingesting vitamin D led experts to advise an intake of 25-50 micrograms daily.

Shelley Burns is a doctor of naturopathic medicine and completed studies at the Canadian College of Naturopathic Medicine. She has certification in complementary and integrative medicine from Harvard University.

*"Summer
afternoon; to me
those have
always been the
two most
beautiful words
in the English
language."*

-Henry James

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