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Summer Proof Your Skin

Thank God! We are actually talking about the “S” word, S-U-M-M-E-R! But before you go getting too excited, and run like the wind to the beach or the pool, stop and protect your finest asset—your skin.

The summer months bring such a welcome to so many things—warmth, sunshine, track season, concerts, outdoor activities, picnics and playing...it just can't last long enough! But caring for your skin prior to many of these events will literally take years off your face!

Sunscreen is an absolute must! UV rays are the leading cause of premature aging and result in 99% of early wrinkles! Minimum SPF recommended is 15, but that is a recommendation for everyday use, all year long. Once May hits, it's time to boost up the power and get a daily dose of an SPF 30, even for everyday use—under make-up, and heading to the office.

For outdoor protection, an SPF of 30 is sufficient, but requires re-application approximately every two hours. If your plan is to

hit the beach, outdoor sports, or a little bit of golf, don't forget to slide the sunscreen in your bag! I'm also a stickler for a wide brimmed hat, visor, or ball cap in addition to sunscreen.

Sunscreen ingredients contain both UV protectors and UV reflectors. Protectors absorb a certain amount of Ultra Violet rays, and then the rest are absorbed by the layers of the skin. Examples of protectors include methoxycinnamate and benzophenone. UV reflectors act like shields, or tiny mirrors that reflect the sun rays off the surface of the skin. Reflectors include zinc oxide and titanium dioxide. Zinc used to be a favorite of life guards!

As crucial to your skin as your sun protection is, sunscreen products also contain important additives, called antioxidants, primarily vitamins A, C and E. Antioxidants are designed to reduce and prevent free radical damage. Free radicals are energized oxygen molecules that break down healthy skin cells, resulting in fine lines and wrinkles, loss of elasticity, hyperpigmentation, and poor skin color. These oxygen molecules gain their energy from UV exposure, pollution, smok-

ing, inflammation, poor health, and improper skin care. Antioxidants are the key players in combating free radical damage—especially Vitamins A, C, and E. This is actually the case for both internal and external use. (Which is exactly why taking daily vitamins is so important for our health—to prevent free radical formation from within our systems). These vitamins prevent the formation of free radicals, inhibit further free radical damage, and even have the ability to enhance the efficacy of sunscreen ingredients.

So, it's quite clear that sunscreen has a multitude of benefits, beyond simply protecting from Ultra Violet rays.

Remember, it takes fifteen to eighteen years for one severe sun exposure to show up on the surface of the skin. This means that what we see at forty and fifty, is the result of what we did at twenty and thirty—and sometimes it's not very pretty. Do yourself a favor, protect your most precious asset, and slather on the sunscreen!

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