

## Safe Fun in the Sun

### Nutrition Offers UV Shield

Sharron Leonard

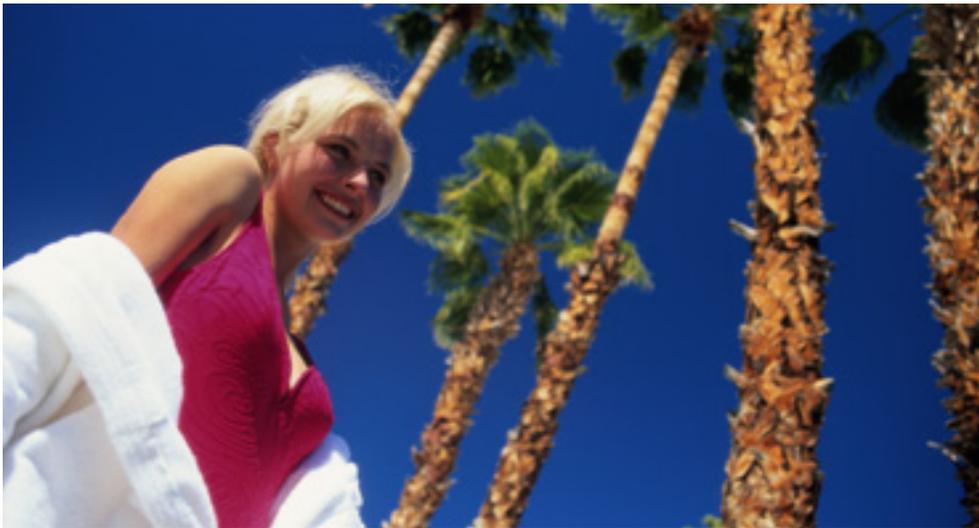
Because sunlight activates the synthesis of vitamin D, a nutrient that works with vitamin A to build strong bones and good eyesight it is essential for health. Furthermore, bright light, specifically sunshine, can improve your mood and help ward off depression. But all things in moderation. Overexposure 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

*"You are the most valuable investment you will ever make."*



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

Continued on page 2

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#### In this Issue

**Safe Fun in the Sun**

**Stay Hydrated**

**Here Comes the Sun**

Continued from page 1

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/](http://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](http://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](http://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.

# Stay Hydrated

Jennie Hastings Stancu

Has your therapist told you about the importance of drinking water?

After all, our bodies are composed of approximately 60 percent water, and all of our bodily functions are sustained by water. Dehydration is one of the most common detriments to our health, and one of the easiest problems to fix. Make staying hydrated simple and seamlessly interwoven throughout your day.

## START EACH DAY OFF RIGHT

Start your morning with a tall, room-temperature glass of water with lemon squeezed into it, before you start taking any tea, coffee, or food. Front-loading hydration is helpful to the body. And be luxurious with your water--for a special treat, add mint, cucumber, or lemon.

## HALF YOUR WEIGHT

It is difficult to know how much water is enough. One rule of thumb is to take half your body weight in pounds, and drink that many ounces of water per day.

So if you weigh 150 pounds, this would equal 75 ounces of water. For many of us, however, this might not be enough. If you are working hard, or you live in a particularly dry climate, you might need to drink even more than this.

## WHAT ABOUT BPA?

You've probably seen the phrase "BPA free" on water bottles, and you may want to gravitate toward these. BPA stands for bisphenol A, which is a chemical found in polycarbonate plastics and epoxy resins.

According to [Mayoclinic.org](http://Mayoclinic.org), some research has shown BPA can seep from a container into foods and beverages, and this is concerning because of possible health effects BPA has on the brain and behavior. Look for non-plastic bottles, or look for the "BPA free" logo.

## OTHER DRINKS

Drinking herbal tea is a good way to stay hydrated. You can also augment your hydration with electrolyte-fortified water or sports drinks. However, be

aware that a lot of these drinks have incredibly high levels of sugar in them. Hydration isn't a healthy habit if you drink a day's worth of sugar in every glass. So check the label before you buy.

Jennie Hastings Stancu is a licensed massage therapist and author.



Stay hydrated to keep your body functioning optimally

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# Here Comes the Sun

## Updated UV Index Shines Light on Rays

A crucial warning system has been recently updated for your skin's protection. In compliance with the World Health Organization, the Environmental Protection Agency and the National Weather Service revamped the UV Index, a system created to alert people about the level of harmful ultraviolet (UV) light rays from the sun. Overexposure to UV rays can cause wrinkles and premature aging, skin cancer, cataracts, and immune system suppression.

Many factors influence the strength of UV rays: UV light is stronger in the summer, at higher altitudes, and in areas closer to the equator. It's also stronger at midday, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., when the sun is directly overhead.

The new UV index ranges from 0-11

with guidelines as follows:

0-2: **LOW.**

Minimal exposure for the average person, but watch for reflected UV from snow and water.

3-5: **MODERATE.**

Stay in the shade during midday. Cover-up outside.

6-7: **HIGH.**

Wear a hat, sunglasses, and a sunscreen with a minimum sun protection factor (SPF) of 15. Avoid midday sun.

8-10: **VERY HIGH.**

Take extra precautions, and avoid midday sun. Wear protective clothing.

11: **EXTREME.**

Take all precautions, seek shade, and avoid midday sun. If possible, stay indoors.

As part of its daily forecast, the National Weather Service publishes the UV index

for each area of the country. Go to [www.epa.gov/sunwise/uvindex.html](http://www.epa.gov/sunwise/uvindex.html) and enter your zip code to find your UV index for the day. The Weather Channel, as well as most local TV stations, include the UV index in their weather forecast. It can also be found at [www.weather.com](http://www.weather.com).

For a detailed description of the UV index, or for more information on sun protection, visit [www.epa.gov/sunwise](http://www.epa.gov/sunwise).

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