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HEALTHY SKIN, BY THE NUMBERS

Unless you've decided to hibernate this summer, you've got to know exactly how to stay as lovely and well as you are right now.

We asked M.D.'s—and women who've faced off against skin cancer—to download what they've learned.

BY SUNNY SEA GOLD

Types of skin cancer

Basal and squamous cell cancers are the most common: They affect more than 3 million Americans each year, though the vast majority of people who are diagnosed survive. It's thought that most cases are caused by everyday exposure to the sun (the kind you get just walking to your car), which over time damages your skin's DNA. Then there's melanoma—the cancer that is strongly linked to sunburns—plus one you may never have heard of: Merkel cell carcinoma, which may be caused by a virus. Merkel cell is pretty rare, but it and melanoma can be deadly if they're not caught early. *Always* call your doctor if something seems wrong with your skin. "It can be a pimple or sore that won't seem to heal, shiny or rough patches, a mole that starts to change, even a scar you don't remember getting," says Darrell Rigel, M.D., a clinical professor of dermatology at New York University Medical Center.

1 The number of colors normal moles have

Any mole that has more than one shade needs to be checked by your dermatologist. Be wary, too, if a beauty mark is asymmetrical or has irregular borders, or if it's larger than a pencil eraser. Moles shouldn't crust, bleed, or grow, either.

98

The percentage of people with early-stage melanoma who will survive at least five years

That number drops to 63 percent once the disease reaches the lymph nodes, and 17 percent if it spreads to other organs. This is why early detection is so key. "Melanomas are almost always curable when the tumor is thin and has not spread," says dermatologist Carin Litani, M.D., a spokesperson for the Skin Cancer Foundation. "But once it reaches other parts of the body, it can travel quickly, becoming harder to treat and potentially fatal."

6

Months it took Shana Meganck to see a doctor about her basal cell carcinoma

The spot looked like a blackhead surrounded by a discolored ring of skin—strange, but not jarring enough to make the 34-year-old from Richmond, VA, book an appointment. Part of what held her back was this misconception: "Nobody thinks a person with dark skin can get skin cancer," says Shana, whose heritage is Lebanese, East Indian, and Venezuelan. It took two hours for a doctor to cut out the cancer. "They would take off one layer of skin, test it, then come back and take another layer until all traces of the cancer were gone," Shana says—an effort to save as much skin and tissue as possible. Shana says she hasn't missed a skin check since: "I know now that we're *all* at risk."

6

Times you can burn before it doubles your risk of getting melanoma

Scary, right? But you can shield your skin by choosing a daily sunscreen with SPF 15. Better yet, go for SPF 30 (hey, it feels the same on your skin). While 15 is the FDA's minimum recommendation for skin cancer prevention, other leading agencies suggest doubling it. Also look for *broad spectrum* on the label, which protects against both UVA and UVB rays. "Apply sunscreen 30 minutes before heading outdoors," Litani says. "This allows the skin to fully absorb it and protect you by the time you need it." Our picks:

FOR YOUR FACE
Aveeno Protect + Hydrate Lotion Sunscreen with Broad Spectrum SPF 50 for Face, \$9.99.

FOR EVERYDAY
Neutrogena Healthy Defense Daily Moisturizer SPF 50 for Sensitive Skin, \$13.99.

FOR YOUR BODY
Coppertone ClearlySheer Spray, SPF 50, \$8.99.



2

The maximum number of hours you can go without reapplying sunscreen

It doesn't matter if you're standing still, without so much as a drop of sweat on your body—put on another coat within 120 minutes. End of story.

30

The percentage of adults who have not had a skin check in the last 12 months

You're busy, we know—but an annual exam is the best way to catch cancerous changes early. In fact, research shows that people who get regular checks are more likely to be diagnosed with melanoma when it's far more treatable. Worried the exam will slip your mind? "I always say to schedule it near your birthday," Rigel says. (It's the best gift you can give yourself, when you think about it.) Check your own skin every month, too—do it the day you pay your cable bill, if that's a good reminder. "This is a team effort between you and your doctor," he says. "You should know your own skin and moles so you can tell if something has changed."

9

The number of years dermatologist Vivian Bucay, M.D., has been cancer-free

Bucay's melanoma started out in her belly button. By the time she found it—thanks to some whitish residue on the inside of her clothing, likely from a sore caused by the tumor—it was late-stage. She beat the odds after five surgeries and numerous other treatments. Today, she encourages others to be very thorough during skin checks. Most melanomas develop in exposed areas, but genetic mutations can cause them to grow in spots that don't get any sun. "Check all areas, including the scalp, mouth, and under the nails," says Bucay, who's based in San Antonio. "In people with a family history of melanoma, I also check the genitals—and I refer these patients to an ophthalmologist to have the back of their eyes looked at, since melanoma can arise there."

30

The age at which Rhonda Sparks became a widow—and a single mother of three

"My husband, Darren, loved the outdoors and couldn't even count the number of sunburns he'd had as a child," says Rhonda, who's now 44 and living in Sonora, CA. "But up until the moment he was diagnosed with melanoma, neither of us had ever gone for a skin check." Darren went to the doctor after he noticed that a mole on his back had started to change color and shape. The cancer was Stage I. "I figured they'd cut it out and he'd be fine," Rhonda says. But cancer cells had already migrated to his lymphatic system—a problem they discovered two years later, when Darren noticed a swollen lymph node in his neck. "We were in shock," she says. "I'll never forget watching our little boys playing in the living room, carefree and joyful, while Darren and I just sat quietly in disbelief." Darren stayed positive, but lost his battle with melanoma five years after his diagnosis. Rhonda has since made it her mission to save her own kids, and others, from the same fate. In 2006, she founded a sun-protective clothing line called UV Skinz for swimming and playing outdoors. "I want moms to know that skin cancer is being diagnosed at a faster rate than any other cancer, but it's easily prevented," she says.

419,000

The number of skin cancers that are linked to indoor tanning each year

Because yes, women still bake in tanning beds, especially in their 20s. In 2013, roughly 14 percent of women under 30 used a tanning bed, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. That's in spite of the fact that the World Health Organization puts them in the same cancer-causing category as cigarettes and radiation. Cut it out, okay?

COURTESY OF MANUFACTURERS.