

# The Skin Cancer Foundation Journal

We care about you and your family.

**Testing, 1, 2, 3**  
How sunscreens prove they work as promised

**Melanoma at Its Most Curable**  
Watch for these early signs

**Not My Face!**  
A model faces skin cancer with heart and humor



2016

## ASK THE Experts

Quiz!

### WHAT'S YOUR SKIN SENSE SCORE?

Do you know the best ways to keep your face, neck, chest and hands soft, smooth and unspotted, and which factors are most likely to age your skin before its time? Take our quiz to test your knowledge and review our best strategies for younger-looking skin.

by Julie K. Karen, MD



Illustration by MEG HUNT

Start here

1. Is the way my skin looks mainly determined by how old I am?  
 Yes.  No.
2. Can the sun age my skin before its time?  
 Yes.  No.
3. I've heard that most sun damage occurs before age 18, so can't I just stop worrying about my skin?  
 Yes.  No.
4. Since a base tan can prevent sunburn, can I reduce sun damage and skin aging by tanning?  
 Yes.  No.
5. The signs of skin aging seem most noticeable on the face, so can I mainly focus on protecting my face from the sun?  
 Yes.  No.
6. Can sunscreen help prevent skin aging?  
 Yes.  No.
7. If I use moisturizers and makeup that include sunscreen, can I skip using a separate sunscreen?  
 Yes.  No.
8. If I use sunscreen daily, can I skip other forms of sun protection and still prevent skin aging?  
 Yes.  No.
9. Can anything actually reverse sun damage I already have?  
 Yes.  No.
10. Shouldn't I spend some time outdoors without sun protection so that I can maintain a healthy level of vitamin D?  
 Yes.  No.

Turn the page for the answers.

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## ASK THE Experts

**1. Answer: No.** How does your mom or grandmother look? Genetics plays a big role. But how you treat your skin is equally important. This includes environmental factors, especially sun exposure and pollution, as well as lifestyle, including your overall health, exercise, nutrition, the products you apply and whether or not you smoke or use tanning beds.

**2. Answer: Yes.** So much of what we think of as "natural" aging isn't natural at all. It's damage from the sun. In fact, the sun's harmful ultraviolet (UV) rays cause about 90 percent of the visible signs of skin aging. Skin changes attributable to the sun, including dark spots, enlarged blood vessels, sagging, leathery texture and wrinkles, are called photodamage.

**3. Answer: No.** Contrary to popular belief, you get about 80 percent of your lifetime sun damage after age 18. Sun protection at any age can slow the advance of skin aging. Daily sun protection for life can make all the difference.

**4. Answer: No.** That's a big myth! People come into my office with a tan, saying it's a "base tan" and it makes them feel protected, but tanning occurs because you've already injured your skin. It's the skin's imperfect attempt to prevent further harm by putting up a darker wall of pigment. Whether outdoors or in a tanning bed, UV radiation damages the skin's DNA, which accelerates skin aging and increases the risk of skin cancer. It's very hard to reverse the damage. Here's my mandate: With or without sunscreen, never lie out in the sun to try to get a tan, and don't use tanning beds. There's no such thing as a protective tan!

**5. Answer: No.** Any part of the body frequently exposed to the sun will age before its time. This especially includes wrinkles, leathery appearance and dark spots on the backs of your hands as well as on your neck and chest. A mismatch between the appearance of those body parts and your face can give away your true age.

**6. Answer: Yes.** In 2013 an important study finally proved what many of us have long suspected. It showed that people who used an SPF 15 or higher broad-spectrum sunscreen every day had almost no detectable skin aging over four and a half years, while those who did not use sunscreen every day did show skin aging.

The key is to apply sunscreen all year long no matter what. You don't have to feel warmth to be exposed to ultraviolet A (UVA) radiation. While UVB rays are strongest in the summer months, UVA rays are intense year-round — they inflict damage on your skin in cold weather, at high altitude, through clouds and



#### You Are What You Eat

Protecting your skin from the sun is the best way to keep it looking its best. But eating lots of colorful fruits and veggies loaded with vitamins and antioxidants can't hurt!

fog and even through glass. That's why people in the U.S. tend to have more skin aging (and skin cancer) on the left side, due to exposure through the car window. It's the opposite in countries where the driver sits on the right.

**7. Answer: Yes and No.** Moisturizers and makeup that include an SPF 15 broad-spectrum (UVA and UVB) sunscreen may be fine for everyday, incidental exposure, as long as you're using enough and not sweating it off. For any extended outdoor exposure, though, opt for a high-powered (SPF 30 or higher), broad-spectrum, water-resistant, stand-alone sunscreen. You also should reapply it every two hours outdoors and after swimming or sweating.

**8. Answer: No.** Sunscreen is vital but can't protect you completely, especially with prolonged sun exposure during the summer. No matter how much sunscreen you apply or how high an SPF it offers, some of the sun's rays get through to your skin. Along with using sunscreen and seeking shade, you should cover up as much as possible. Sun-protective clothing and broad-brimmed hats are essential components of effective sun protection. If wearing a hat is not your thing, consider a sun umbrella or parasol. Don't forget UV-blocking sunglasses. Consider adding a lightweight scarf over your V-neck to help protect your delicate neck and décolletage. Or try a high-tech sun shirt. Many are made with specialized fabric that helps keep you cool while providing an ultraviolet protection factor (UPF) of 30 or higher, which allows only 1/30<sup>th</sup> of the sun's rays to reach the skin.

**9. Answer: Yes, to a certain extent.** You can't completely eliminate all of your sun damage, but there are ways to reduce it. Retinoids in topical products can improve texture and tone and reduce fine lines. However, they may also increase sun sensitivity, so be diligent about sun protection when you're using them.

Intriguing early evidence shows that antiaging products containing DNA repair enzymes may help reverse signs of aging due to the sun. Topical products containing antioxidants may also help. Sun exposure produces free radicals — highly reactive molecules that trigger damaging inflammation. Topical products containing antioxidants partially neutralize free radicals and thus may reduce their skin-aging effects. A balanced diet can also provide antioxidants. While more research is needed, eating a healthy diet containing lots of colorful fruits and vegetables high in vitamins and antioxidants may help improve your skin.

In-office laser therapy can also reverse signs of aging and, just as important, eliminate some precancer-

ous growths that could progress to skin cancer over time. On patients with extensive sun damage, I often use photodynamic therapy (PDT), a treatment using a light-sensitizing drug and a kind of light that activates the drug to selectively target atypical or precancerous cells. This procedure can reverse some of the signs of skin aging. Like retinoids, this technique increases sun sensitivity, so it is far more popular during the winter months. Other cosmetic procedures such as chemical peels and nonablative and ablative fractional resurfacing can help reverse some of the visible signs of photodamage.

**10. Answer: No.** Healthy vitamin D levels are indeed important to bone health, proper immune function and your overall health. However, there are several risk-free ways to achieve healthy vitamin D levels that don't involve sun exposure. Seeking sun exposure without protection will only add to your cumulative sun damage, increasing your skin cancer risks and accelerating skin aging. And don't even think about getting vitamin D from a tanning bed. Tanning beds mainly emit UVA, while your skin only synthesizes vitamin D in response to UVB rays. A balanced diet including fortified foods such as yogurt and cereal, as well as certain fatty fish, along with oral supplements, are healthy ways to achieve appropriate levels of vitamin D. ■

#### How'd You Score?

Give yourself 1 point for each correct answer and 0 for each incorrect answer, then check your total.

**0-4 points:** You're a skin sense novice. Now is the perfect time to adopt new habits to protect your skin and keep yourself looking as young as possible. It's never too late to start!

**5-7 points:** You're a skin sense student. You've learned enough to get a passing grade but need to review and adopt skin protection habits before you can earn an A.

**8-10 points:** You're a skin sense superstar! If you're already following the advice in this quiz, you probably hear compliments all the time about how young you look: A+! If not, this info should serve as inspiration to protect your skin even better.

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## Celebrities Who Practice What We Preach

At The Skin Cancer Foundation, a crucial part of our focus is reminding people to live a sun-safe life. It's the easiest way to prevent skin cancer, and it helps keep the signs of aging at bay. We work hard to spread the word, but we love it when celebrities help us. Here are three we admire for their message.



#### CONSISTENCY IS KEY

Academy Award-winning actress **Julianne Moore** (starring in the upcoming Coen Brothers' comedy *Suburbicon*) said the secret to her porcelain skin is consistent sun protection: "Sunscreen is my number-one thing. I've worn it every day since I was 23. In the morning I pat on an SPF 30 lotion."

— in Redbook magazine



#### START EARLY

When asked to complete the sentence "I wish I could tell my younger self," **Anna Faris**, star of the TV comedy *Mom*, replied, "to not care so much about what other people think — and use sunscreen."

— in Good Housekeeping magazine



#### BAN THE TAN

Comedian **Tina Fey**, star of *Whiskey Tango Foxtrot*, employs helpful acronyms in her skin protection regimen. The first is: • SOOTS ("Stay out of the sun") And the three rules of SOOTS are: • Sunscreen • AWAH ("Always wear a hat") • DLO ("Don't lay out")

— in her bestseller *Bossypants*