

SUN DAMAGE

Not long ago, a suntan was considered a "healthy" look. As we learn more about skin, we know a suntan is actually the result of damage to the skin. In addition to painful sunburn, excessive sun exposure can lead to faster loss of skin function over our lifetime, and has been linked to skin cancer.

- Avoid direct sunlight during the peak hours of 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
- Wear a hat and protective clothing to help protect your skin from the sun's damaging rays
- Don't count on a cloudy day or darker skin tone to protect you from sun damage!
- Liberal and frequent use of sunscreen with a Sun Protection Factor (SPF) of 15 or higher

WHEN YOU MAY NEED EXTRA HELP

Despite good care, skin may develop infections, growths or other changes that require evaluation by a qualified health care provider. Delay in seeking medical attention can result in pain and serious damage. Examples of things that should be evaluated by your health care provider are:

- Rashes that don't get better quickly
- Open sores that don't heal in two weeks
- Redness, heat, pain and swelling at the site of an open sore, crack or abrasion
- Moles or other marks that change in color, size, shape or that become painful

SO, HOW DO YOU PROTECT "THE SKIN YOU'RE IN"?

Taking care of your skin doesn't need to be complicated or expensive. The main items you need are:

- Gentle, pH-balanced cleanser
- Skin moisturizers and emollients such as lotion, cream, oil or petrolatum applied within 3 minutes of bathing and when skin feels or looks dry
- Good nutrition and plenty of water

Use these items regularly. Your common sense is key to taking care of the skin you're in!



This pamphlet has been brought to you by the Association for the Advancement of Wound Care (AAWC) through the volunteer support and clinical expertise of the AAWC Public Awareness Task Force.

OUR MISSION

AAWC is a non-profit, multidisciplinary Association that gives its members the opportunity, through numerous Association benefits and leadership opportunities, to build a collaborative community to facilitate optimal care for those who suffer with wounds.

DID YOU KNOW?

AAWC has a variety of membership and contribution options. Categories of membership exist for healthcare providers and their facilities, but also for wound care patients and their caregivers.

WOUND CARE PATIENTS NEED A VOICE!

Become a part of AAWC's Advocacy Team! Join AAWC today, and encourage your healthcare providers to become members. For questions about AAWC Membership or to make a charitable contribution, please call or visit:

Toll Free: 866-AAWC-999
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The SKIN You're IN



A Guide to Protecting Your Skin from Climate and the Environment

Brought to you by the
Association for the Advancement of Wound Care

Take good care of The Skin You're In!

Your skin is your body's special suit of armor, and the largest organ you have. In order to take good care of it, you have to get to know your skin!

Your body's armor is made up of three layers:

- **Epidermis**, the outermost layer, which has water-proofing keratin
- **Dermis**, the middle layer, which contains collagen fibers for strength, blood vessels for nutrition, sweat and oil glands for temperature regulation and protection, as well as nerve fibers for sensation
- **Hypodermis**, the deepest skin layer, contains fat for cushioning, insulation and energy storage



But it's not there just to look good, your skin also:

- Regulates your temperature
- Protects you from contaminants and infection
- Senses the world around you
- Produces Vitamin D from sunlight
- Provides metabolic functions
- Provides immune function

In order for our skin to provide the best function and protection, we need to protect it from damage.

We also need good nutrition and plenty of water.

As we age, our skin will naturally undergo changes: layers become thinner, more fragile and dry.

While we can't stop aging, there are steps we can take now that can optimize our skin's performance in the future.



Temperature regulation is a key function of the skin. The normal skin temperature is 92 degrees; our core body temperature is 98.6 degrees. The skin acts like an automatic air conditioning system to maintain the body's core temperature.



HEAT

The body's response to excess heat is to dilate (expand) blood vessels. This releases heat by:

- Conduction
- Radiation
- Evaporation

Sweating cools the body as fluid evaporates from the skin surface. High humidity impairs the skin's ability to sweat. Light, loose layers of clothing allow the body to cool more easily. Failure to cool the body may cause heat exhaustion, which can progress to the life-threatening condition of "heat stroke".

COLD

The body responds to cold several ways:

- Blood vessels constrict to divert heat to internal organs
- Tiny muscles attached to hair follicles cause hair to stand out causing "goose bumps"
- The human body "shivers" to generate heat from increased muscular activity



Exposing the skin to extreme cold conditions without protection for even a short period of time may result in frostbite. Blood vessels constrict, reducing the flow of blood (and warmth) to the skin, making the nose, toes, feet, ears, and fingers more prone to frostbite. **Bundle up in the cold!**

WHEN SKIN IS TOO WET

While moisturizers help dry skin, too much moisture, such as water, perspiration or other liquids, can damage your "suit of armor". How do you know if your skin is too moist? It may appear:

- Prune-like
- Pale and spongy
- Fragile and soft



Remember the last time you stayed in the bathtub or pool too long? Your skin may have become waterlogged or "macerated". This can lead to damage to or loss of the skin's outermost layers. Normally, glands located in your skin produce an oily substance to help protect your skin from excessive moisture. When this is soaked away, the skin can develop problems.

When perspiration gets trapped and cannot evaporate easily, as in skin folds and between toes, we may also develop macerated skin. These areas may become raw, irritated and prone to infection when damaged, prune-like skin rubs off.

WHEN SKIN IS TOO DRY

Many of us are prone to having dry skin, especially during cold or dry weather. Loss of humidity in the air, whether the air is cold or hot, can result in dry skin. Dry skin may:

- Feel tight and itchy
- Crack and flake
- Be easily damaged

Dry skin is fragile. Cuts, abrasions and skin tears can lead to a serious infection.

