




Protecting Your Skin from the Sun

We all need Vitamin D. Twenty minutes of sun exposure a day will give you a wonderful dose of Vitamin D. However, prolonged exposure to ultraviolet radiation can also cause skin damage, skin cancer, and cataracts.

So, what do you do *after* getting your daily 20 minutes of sun exposure?

1. **Antioxidants** protect the body from free radical damage. *Vitamin A* and *Beta Carotene* are especially good for the skin.
 - a. Good sources of Beta Carotene:
 - i. Red, orange, and yellow colored fruits and vegetables contain a lot of beta carotene.
 - ii. Carrots, carrot juice, mango, spinach, papaya, apricots, blue-green algae, collard greens, kale, cantaloupe, red peppers, mustard greens, broccoli, winter squash, cooked dandelion leaves
 - b. Good Sources of Vitamin A:
 - i. Cod liver oil and organic animal livers.
(Consult your doctor for the amount of Vitamin A appropriate for you. Pregnant women and small children should be cautious when taking Vitamin A supplements.)
2. When you are in the sun:
 - a. **Sunscreen.** Choosing a good sunscreen can be very confusing. The active ingredients in sunscreen are designed to absorb the UV waves so that your body doesn't. The Environmental Working Group lists the best and worst sunscreens on their web site (<http://www.cosmeticsdatabase.com/special/sunscreens/summary.php>). The best sunscreens are low in toxicity and protect from both UVA and UVB. Specialized UV clothing is available and is sold with a UV rating. Remember, however, that UV protective shorts or short sleeve shirts won't protect your calves or forearms. More skin care products can be found at www.cosmeticsdatabase.com.
 - b. **Wear a hat!** Choose your hat wisely and make sure that it covers your neck, ears, and nose. Skin cancer likes to crop up behind the ears, the nose, at the corner of the eye, the lower lip, or the back of your neck. Check these hard to see places regularly if you are prone to sun damage or have recently been sunburned!
 - c. **Sunglasses.** The sun's rays can also damage our eyes and promote cataracts. Choose a pair of sunglasses that fit well and don't let light in around the corners. Highly scratched sunglasses are dangerous as they let in more UV rays when your pupils are dilated by the tinted lenses.
 - d. **Snow and sand.** Reflective surfaces can reflect UV light upward. Be cautious when in areas with highly reflective surfaces such as snow, sand, or water. Apply sunscreen appropriately.