

Natural Sun Protection



By Dr. Carol Ann Fischer, B.S., D.C., N.D.

During the summer people spend more time outdoors when exposure to the sun increases levels of vitamin D in the skin. To protect the skin from sun damage, and to prevent sunburn, however, Vitamin D has to be in balance with the vitamins A, C, E, and F, and the mineral calcium.

To gain this balance, many people

turn to supplements. But synthetic vitamins are not metabolized in the same way that natural vitamins are and recent government data has linked synthetic vitamin A to accelerated growth of skin tumors and lesions. According to a recent study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association, there are more risks associated with the use of synthetic

vitamins. The overall conclusion of the study was that synthetic sources of beta carotene, vitamin A, and vitamin E may increase mortality risk.

To protect the skin from the sun it is best to get vitamins A, C, E, and F from whole food supplements or directly from whole food in the diet. The following are some foods that are rich in anti-oxidants, which are beneficial for the skin, especially in the summer months. Increasing these nutrients is easy with the abundance of fresh fruits and vegetables during the summer.

- Calcium is found in cucumbers, kale, parsley, peas, snap beans and broccoli. Calcium is the most abundant mineral in the body. It is stored in the bones and teeth, and helps keep the body and skin healthy.
- Vitamin A is found in carrots, kale, sweet potatoes, eggs, plain yogurt and spinach. This vitamin is a powerful antioxidant to help maintain healthy cells.
- Vitamin C is found in guava, cucumbers, kiwi, cantaloupe, citrus, peppers and broccoli. This vitamin is an anti-oxidant and maintains healthy skin. It is the only vitamin that needs to be consumed daily, since it is not stored in the body.
- Vitamin E is found in raw fruit and nearly all fresh green vegetables, almonds, peanut butter, sweet potatoes, and egg yolk. This vitamin is beneficial to skin health, preventing cellular skin damage.
- Vitamin F is found in green vegetables, nuts, avocado, vegetable oils, flaxseed and olive oil. This vitamin improves skin color and circulation. Vitamin F is also needed for proper brain function, good nerve flow, calcium metabolism and the production of hormones.

Italians know the health benefits and healing properties of good fat. They have been using extra virgin olive oil for centuries, and consider it

liquid gold. Olive oil is used in Italian cooking, and is also a popular folk remedy for sunburn, dry hair, dry skin and persistent earaches according to the book "The Healing Powers of Olive Oil," by Cal Orey.

According to research in the book, one tablespoon of olive oil has the power to wipe out the cholesterol-raising effects of two eggs. Olive oil can also play a vital anti-aging role when looking at making diet and lifestyle changes. Adding olive oil to the diet helps to improve skin health, overall body health and calcium metabolism.

Proper calcium levels in the body are dependent upon the presence of vitamins A,C,E, and F. Vitamins A, C and E ensure the absorption of calcium into different body tissues. Vitamin F helps to prevent sunburn by mobilizing calcium. The body requires a balance between vitamin F and vitamin D from the sun to metabolize calcium and move it into different body tissues. Too much vitamin D from the sun, and too little vitamin F, can result in an imbalance of calcium in the tissues appearing on the skin as sunburn. The use of a safe sunscreen is the best protection from the sun when dietary changes are not possible. More than a million cases of skin cancer are diagnosed every year in the United States alone. Many sunscreens do not work as well as they should to protect against the sun's damaging UV rays. Thankfully, there are many non-chemical forms of sunscreen products available. Organic Consumers Association recently published a shopper's safety guide to many personal care products, including the safest and most effective sunscreens.

In May 2010 they published a safety guide that included the safest and most effective forms of sunscreen. The OCA Personal Care and Cleaning Products Safety Guide outlines which lists the different consumer products that are safe and free of dioxane, a known carcinogen.

Other categories in the guide include dishwashing soap, hand soap, all-purpose soap, laundry detergents, household cleaners, and personal care products.

The Environmental Working Group also recently published a study of 500 different sunscreens, finding only 8 percent, or 39, of the sunscreen products currently on the market are safe. The remaining 461 sunscreen products either don't provide adequate protection or contain potentially hazardous ingredients, or both.

The commonly used red-flag ingredients in sunscreen are synthetic vitamin A (retinylpalmitate) and the chemical oxybenzone. To view the EWG guide that analyzes the SPF claims and the different potentially hazardous chemicals to avoid visit EWG.org/2010sunscreens/. To view the Organic Consumers guide, visit OrganicConsumers.org/bodycare/ShoppersSafetyGuide.pdf.

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