

## Tips for how to protect your skin

*By Ellen Waldman*

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When we were growing up, sitting in the sun and getting as tan as possible were pretty normal activities in the summer.

You might have had your own special concoction for deepening your tan, too. Mine had coconut oil, cocoa butter and a splash of wheat germ oil for that bronzed look. We know now that this is not a look we should aspire to. It can, in fact, cause skin cancer.

Here's what the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says about this and how to protect your skin. Less than half of older adults protect their skin from the sun when outside for an hour or more on a warm, sunny day. This may raise their risk of getting skin cancer.

Each year in the United States, more than 5 million people are treated for skin cancer, at a cost of about \$8.1 billion. Most cases of skin cancer are found in people older than 65. Because older adults are living longer, the need to promote lifelong skin health is more critical than ever.

People who reach the age of 65 can expect to live, on average, two more decades. This means that efforts to improve the use of sun protection and reduce sunburn among older adults likely would help to reduce skin cancer risk in later decades of life.

Here are simple suggests for sun protection: Stay in the shade, use sunscreen, wear a wide-brimmed hat, wear clothing to the ankles, and wear a long-sleeved shirt. Only about 15% of older adults and 8% of sun-sensitive older adults regularly use all five kinds of sun protection.

Another important way to protect your skin year-round is to keep it moisturized. As we age, skin becomes drier and thinner, and you can address this by taking special measures. It's more than mere appearance. Skin can also tear more easily when it's not well cared for.

Here's what the experts recommend for daily skin care.

- Avoid hot showers, as it strips oils from skin. Instead, use more moderate temperatures.
- Soap is needed only on certain parts of the body: the back of the neck, armpits, groin/buttocks and feet. Standing under running water takes care of the rest of the body.
- Moisturizers. Within three minutes after a bath/shower, lubricate with a good-quality moisturizer. They recommend Cerave Cream, Cetaphil Cream or coconut oil. Some people need to do this routine two or more times a day.

These steps will help the skin be less dry and itchy, and more supple. Most people who follow this regimen notice improvements in weeks to months.

One problem here in recent years is the difficulty in getting a yearly skin-check appointment with a dermatologist. We have lots of excellent ones, but they often have long waits until you can be seen. Many are not taking new patients. Here's one option you may not know about.

Valley Immediate Care ([valley-ic.com/dermatology](http://valley-ic.com/dermatology); 541-734-9030; offices in Ashland and Medford) has a medical provider, Timothy MacCurdy, at both of its locations. He focuses on offering dermatology services, including medical, surgical and cosmetic needs. The best part is they can see patients in two to three weeks without a referral. If it's been a while since your skin has been checked out, now's the time.

I'm taking my first-ever, monthlong break and will be back with another column in September. Until then, I wish you a sun-safe and hopefully a smoke-free summer.