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“Healthy Summer Skin”

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Integrative Medicine

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As the hours of sunlight continue to increase with the approaching summer months, the topic of skin care during the summer months comes up every year. And with the UV index becoming more of an issue every year, the discussion of just how much sunscreen we need stays on as a hot topic every beach season.

One of the issues that keep coming up with my patients when we discuss healthy summertime skin care is whether or not you need to use sunscreen if you are indoors all day.

My general rule with patients is that if you have light where you are, you need sunscreen. So even if you are in a commuter bus or train or in your car and then you go into your office building and work until it is dark, as long as there are windows in your building, you should have some sun protection on.

If you are indoors most of the day, you may be fine using a sunscreen of at the very least SPF 15 but I usually will still recommend at least SPF 25 or 30. Think of it this way, if you are seeing sunlight through the windows, your skin is seeing sunlight as well.

If you are outdoors most of the day, in order to keep your skin from aging and getting dark spots and wrinkles, I would recommend SPF 50. You should also reapply regularly if you are sweating. And even if you are not sweating, you should still reapply at least one more time during the day because it will wear off during the day regardless if you are noticing sweating or not.

Once you are home and you settle in for the night, you would want to wash the sunscreen off your skin, especially if you are prone to acne breakouts. Then you should apply an anti-oxidant serum to help your skin repair and regenerate over night.

Some ingredients to look for are resveratrol, vitamin E, vitamin C, retinoids/vitamin A, licorice root, niacin, and various soy or tea ingredients, just to name a few. The potential antioxidant ingredients in skincare nowadays are immense, so if you feel that you are overwhelmed and are unsure of what to use, you should consult your dermatologist.

Finally, you should make sure that your diet is full of phyto-nutrients and antioxidants as well. Because our skin is our largest organ, if you are lacking nutrients within, that deficiency will show up on your skin and your skin will be less likely able to combat environmental damage.

So, let's keep your skin healthy this summer season but protecting from the inside out with healthy plant-based foods...and outside in with adequate sunscreen protection and antioxidant topical therapy.

Dr. Julie T. Chen, M.D. an integrative medicine physician who is board-certified in internal medicine and is also fellowship-trained and board-certified in integrative medicine. She has her own medical practice in San Jose, CA, is the medical director of corporation wellness at several Silicon Valley-based corporations, is on several medical expert panels of websites as well as non-profit organizations, is a recurring monthly columnist for several national magazines, and has been featured in radio, TV, newspaper, and magazine interviews. She incorporates many types of healing modalities into her practice including, but is not limited to, medical acupuncture, Chinese scalp acupuncture, clinical hypnotherapy, strain-counterstrain osteopathic manipulations, and biofeedback. To learn more about Dr. Julie, you can check out her website at www.makinghealthyez.com.

