
Health Tips: Taking Care of Your Skin

Dry Skin And Itching

There are many possible reasons for dry skin, such as:

- Not drinking enough liquids
- Staying out in the sun
- Being in very dry air
- Smoking
- Feeling stress

Dry skin also can be caused by health problems, such as diabetes or kidney disease. Using too much soap, antiperspirant, or perfume and taking hot baths will make dry skin worse. Moisturizers like lotions, creams, or ointments can soothe dry, itchy skin. They should be used every day. Try taking fewer baths and using milder soap to help your dry skin. Warm water is less drying than hot water.

Bruises

Older people may bruise more easily than younger people. And, it can take longer for the bruises to heal. Some medicines or illnesses may cause bruising. If you see bruises and you don't know how you got them, especially on parts of your body usually covered by clothing, see your doctor.

Skin Cancer

Skin cancer is the most common type of cancer in the United States. The main cause of skin cancer is the sun. Skin cancer may be cured if it is found before it spreads to other parts of the body.

There are three types of skin cancers. Two types, **basal cell carcinoma** and **squamous cell carcinoma**, grow slowly and rarely spread to other parts of the body.

These types of cancer are found mostly on parts of the skin exposed to the sun, like the head, face, neck, hands, and arms, but can happen anywhere on your body.

The third and most dangerous type of skin cancer is **melanoma**. It is rarer than the other types, but can spread to other organs and be deadly.

Check your skin once a month for things that may be cancer. Skin cancer is rarely painful. Look for changes such as a new growth, a sore that doesn't heal, or a bleeding mole. Also, check moles, birthmarks, or other parts of the skin for the "ABCDE's." ABCDE stands for:

A = Asymmetry (one half of the growth looks different from the other half)

B = Borders that are irregular

C = Color changes or more than one color

D = Diameter greater than the size of a pencil eraser

E = Evolving; this means the growth changes in size, shape, symptoms (itching, tenderness), surface (especially bleeding), or shades of color

See your doctor right away if you have any of these signs.

Keep Your Skin Healthy

- **Limit time in the sun.** Try to stay out of the sun between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. This is when the sun's rays are strongest. Don't be fooled by cloudy skies. The sun's rays can go through clouds.
- **Use sunscreen.** Look for a sunscreen with an SPF (sun protection factor) number of 15 or higher. It's best to choose sunscreens with "broad spectrum" on the label. Put the sunscreen on 15-30 minutes before you go outside. Sunscreen should be reapplied about every 2 hours.
- **Wear protective clothing.** A hat with a wide brim can shade your neck, ears, eyes, and head. Look for sunglasses that block 99 to 100 percent of the sun's rays. If you have to be in the sun, wear loose, lightweight, long-sleeved shirts and long pants or long skirts.

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