Skincare: Protecting Your Body’s Protection

Healthy Starts Now

A Protective Barrier

Your body’s skin helps to protect against dangers like bacteria and infections. It also acts as a barrier against the elements, keeping things like rain and the sun from damaging the inside of your body.

Nerves in your skin give you the sense of touch. This helps to protect you from being hurt by heat, cold, and anything painful to the touch.

Your skin provides a protective barrier. But the importance and daily functions of this organ do not stop there.

Your skin is strong, but also flexible. It grows hair, produces natural oil, and helps regulate your body temperature through sweat.

The bottom layer of your skin contains the fat that can help protect muscle and bone from injury. This layer also acts as insulation to help regulate body temperature.

It is important to keep your skin healthy for as long as possible. The longevity of your skin may depend on factors like genetics and the effects of skin conditions and diseases. However, taking preventative measures can help protect your body’s protection!

Springdale Health Department

Source: The Cleveland Clinic
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Potential Skin Problems

As previously stated, skin acts as an external protective barrier. Which also puts skin at risk for damage, including:

> Allergies, like dermatitis and rashes
> Blisters
> Bug bites
> Skin cancer
> Skin infections
> Skin disorders, including acne, dry & sensitive skin, eczema, psoriasis, and vitiligo
> Wounds, burns, and scars

Some of these problems are very common, and others can be more concerning.

Eczema can commonly be found on the hands, neck, inner elbows, ankles, knees, feet and around the eyes.

When to Visit a Healthcare Provider

You should consider visiting your general healthcare provider or a dermatologist if you have concerns over skin changes, such as appearances in moles. Continue reading for more information regarding moles.

Healthcare providers should also be consulted if your skin has a cut that cannot be covered with a bandage. A cut of that size may need stitches.

Severe blisters, burns, signs of skin infection, and unexplained rashes should all be checked by a professional.

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Common Skin Conditions

There are hundreds of skin conditions. Conditions can be temporary or permanent, and effects can range from minor to extreme.

**Acne** - Almost everyone will experience acne at some point in their lives. Acne is most common in teenage and young adult years. Acne is not contagious, it is usually developed due to changes in hormones. There are several types of acne including blackheads, whiteheads, cysts, and other pimples. Like many skin conditions, acne has a large variety in severity. A healthcare provider can diagnose and provide the best treatment options based on acne type and severity.

**Eczema** - A very common condition, that has symptoms of dry, red, itchy, and bumpy skin. Eczema is not contagious. Infants are particularly prone to eczema. Many things can trigger an individual's eczema, it is important to discuss triggers and treatment options with a healthcare provider to avoid flares.

**Psoriasis** - Psoriasis occurs as an immune response. The body creates skin cells too often, creating the red, inflamed, scaly patches of psoriasis. Psoriasis is not contagious. If you have a rash that will not go away, seek treatment from a medical provider.

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Moles
It is important to perform self skin-checks for new or changing moles. Awareness of the signs below can help identify melanoma in early stages.

> **Asymmetry** - one half does not match the other
> **Border** - edges are irregular or blurred
> **Color** - the mole has multiple shades, or patches of several colors
> **Diameter** - the spot is larger than 6mm across
> **Evolving** - the mole has changed in size, shape, or color

If a mole has one of these features, then it is considered suspicious and should be looked at by a healthcare provider. Show your provider any areas that concern you, some skin cancer can be very difficult to identify.

It is recommended to perform self skin-checks once a month. These checks are a simple and free process.

Individuals are encouraged to use a full-length mirror, a hand-held mirror, or the help of a partner for difficult to see areas such as the back or scalp. The individual performing the self-check should examine their entire body, making note of all moles and blemishes. If new spots are noticed during the next self-check, they should be monitored.

Source: www.cancer.org
Skin Protection

Protecting your skin is important for many reasons, including prevention of skin cancer, prevention of wrinkles, and prolonging the health of your skin for as long as possible.

The aging process and the inevitable skin damage from age cannot be stopped. But there are steps that can be taken to help slow the process and keep skin healthy for as long as possible.

A healthcare provider can give advice for skincare and protection that is tailored for your skin's needs.

General protection measures include:

> Apply a broad spectrum sunscreen daily. SPF should be at least 30.
> Avoid prolonged sun exposure.
> Do not use tanning beds.
> Do not use tobacco products.
> Perform regular skin checks.
> Wash your face daily with a gentle facial cleanser.
> Shower often and apply moisturizing lotion to your body afterwards.

Prolonged sun exposure, tanning beds, and tobacco products are some of the avoidable dangers to your skin's health. Damaging your skin can quicken the skin aging process and put skin at risk for disease.
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Should I see a Dermatologist?

If you have a chronic skin condition or are at high risk for skin cancer, it is recommended to visit a dermatologist at least once a year.

Some skin conditions can be handled by your primary healthcare provider. This would typically include mild acne, mild rashes, bug bites, dandruff, athletes' foot, and a few other common conditions.

If you have skin concerns, discuss them with your primary healthcare provider. You may be referred to see a dermatologist for further treatment.

Seeing a dermatologist can also help with overall skin health and longevity. Dermatologists can help individuals better understand their skin type and how to keep it looking and feeling its best.

Dermatologists also help individuals manage common issues like signs of aging and hair loss. These cosmetic issues can have negative effects on mental and social health. A provider may be able to help individuals take preventative measures to decrease worries around cosmetic issues.

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Source: The Cleveland Clinic