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JOURNAL

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People say that beauty's only skin deep; it's what's on the "inside" that counts. Our insides are certainly important, but skin is your first layer of defense against the outside world. Skin can also give important clues to your overall health. Learn to take good care of your skin, so your skin can keep taking good care of you.

Skin protects your body in many ways. "The skin provides a barrier to protect the body from invasion by bacteria and other possible environmental hazards that can be dangerous for human health," says NIH dermatologist Dr. Heidi Kong.

Skin plays other roles, too. It contains nerve endings that let you feel when an object is too hot or sharp, so you can quickly pull away. Sweat glands and tiny blood vessels in your skin help to control your body temperature. And cells in your skin turn sunlight into vitamin D, which is important for healthy bones.

Skin can also alert you to a health problem. A red, itchy rash might signal allergies or infections, and

a red "butterfly" rash on your face might be a sign of lupus. A yellow tint might indicate liver disease. And dark or unusual moles might be a warning sign of skin cancer. Be on the lookout for unexpected changes to your skin, and talk with your doctor if you have concerns.

Your skin can become too dry if you don't drink enough fluids or spend too much time in sunny or dry conditions. "While washing hands is important for good hygiene, washing your hands too much can also lead to dry skin," Kong says, especially if you wash with hot water and harsh soaps. To treat dry skin, use moisturizing creams or lotions, and use warm instead of hot water when you bathe and wash your hands. You can also try using a humidifier to make the air in your home less dry.

The sun can damage your skin as well. Sunlight contains ultraviolet (UV) light that causes sunburn and makes your skin age faster, leading to more wrinkles as you get older. "There's a strong link between UV exposure and skin cancer," Kong adds. So protect

your skin from the sun. Wear hats and other protective clothing, use sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 30, and restrict your time in the sun during the late morning and early afternoon hours, when sunlight is strongest.

Many skin researchers like Kong are studying the skin's microbiome—the bacteria and other microscopic organisms that live on your skin. Some of these microbes can be helpful. Evidence suggests that they boost the body's infection-fighting immune system and help keep you healthy. "But there are some skin diseases with known associations with certain microbes," says Kong. "We're trying to understand how those microbes differ between healthy people and people with skin diseases." In the long run, scientists would like to find ways to support healthy skin microbes while reducing harmful ones.

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Tips for Healthy Skin

- **Wash Up.** Bathe in warm - not hot - water; use mild cleansers that don't irritate; and wash gently - don't scrub.
- **Block sun damage.** Avoid intense sun exposure, use sunscreen, and wear protective clothing.
- **Don't use tanning beds or sunlamps.** They emit the same harmful UV radiation as the sun.
- **Avoid dry skin.** Drink plenty of water, and use gentle moisturizers, lotions, or creams.
- **Reduce stress.** Stress can harm your skin and other body systems.
- **Get enough sleep.** Experts recommend about 9 hours a night for teens and 7-8 hours for adults.
- **Speak up.** Talk to your doctor if you notice any odd changes to your skin, like a rash or mole that changes size or color.

The Best Skin-Saving Tips Dermatologists Tell Their Patients of All Ages

Aging gracefully doesn't mean just looking generally good while getting older; it's more about protecting the skin throughout the years so a healthy complexion can glow at every stage of life. However, with every new decade comes a slew of skin changes, meaning that protecting and restoring skin at 50 has to be done differently than doing so at 20. So, we tapped top dermatologists for their best skin-saving tips for each and every age range so everyone - regardless of the decade they're in - will know exactly how to care for their complexion.

Under 20

If there's one beauty habit everyone should develop at a young age, it's to wear sunscreen. Coppertone partner for the Protect What Matters Most Campaign and New York dermatologist, Elizabeth Hale, MD says that developing good sun-protecting habits early on can have a serious impact on your skin as an adult. "Overexposure to the sun during childhood, even just one blistering sunburn can double your chances for developing melanoma," she adds. "By training children to apply sunscreen every day, similar how to we teach them to brush their teeth each day, we'll diminish people's chance of skin cancer and also help their skin to age in a healthy way." In fact, Dr. Hale claims that 90 percent of visible signs of premature aging are attributed to overexposure to the sun, so wearing sunscreen every day as a teen can keep you looking youthful for much longer.



The Best Skin Saving Tips Dermatologists Tell Their Patients of All Ages

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20s

During your 20s, the most common skin concerns are typically acne and preventive anti-aging. So, it's generally recommended to wash the face twice daily and focus on keeping the skin hydrated. "Make sure to moisturize your skin—face and body—to maintain a healthy skin barrier because dry skin ages more quickly and is more susceptible to inflammation," says San Antonio dermatologist Vivian Bucay, MD. Additionally, just because you're young doesn't excuse you (at any age!) from regular skin checks. "If you see anything unusual on your skin, make sure you see a dermatologist," says Dr. Bucay. "Google is no substitute for seeing a board-certified dermatologist."

30s and 40s

"Two tips for someone in the 30s and 40s—and through their entire lives—is to use retinol every day," says Charleston, SC dermatologist Marguerite Germain, MD. "Some people think they should stop in the summertime because they think retinol causes increased sun sensitivity, but they need to use it all year round in order to get the benefits."

Furthermore, Dr. Germain recommends watching your diet a little closer than usual once you enter your 30s and 40s. "The foods you eat are very important to your skin health," she adds. "Doing an anti-inflammatory diet in which sugar, white flour and dairy products are decreased improves the skin."

50s and Above

"In your 50s, make sure your skin is well hydrated—just because your body is well hydrated, does not mean your skin is," Dr. Germain says. "Good moisturizers with antioxidants and hyaluronic acid need to be applied twice a day." But that's not all. Dr. Germain also says that anyone over 50 should also be incorporating a glycolic acid wash into their routines because it improves cell turnover without drying the surface out. "This does away with the dullness that can occur with aging skin, making the skin appear brighter and more youthful," she adds.

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Avoid the ‘Back-to-School Plague’



As a first-grade teacher, Julie Miller is exposed to a horrifying number of germs on a daily basis.

“I’ve been thrown up on; they sneeze and cough on me. And lost teeth are a real big thing for first-graders,” said Miller, who teaches at Spring Hills Elementary in the suburbs of Chicago.

“They’re so cute and unaware, though. They’ll have boogers hanging out of their nose and will be talking to you and not think anything of it. Some teachers flip out, but I tell my students, ‘Go get a Kleenex and wash your hands.’ When they sneeze, I teach them to do it into their elbows. They learn eventually.”

On average, elementary school children get eight to 12 colds or cases of the flu each school year, according to the CDC. For the older kids, it is about half that. Teachers and parents commonly refer to it as the Back-to-School Plague.

But there are simple ways to keep your kids healthy.

Miller, who is getting her son Justin ready to go to kindergarten, isn’t worried.

“I’ve taught my kids healthy habits; I’m sure they’ll be fine,” Miller said. She makes sure they get plenty of sleep, exercise regularly and eat healthy food. She’s taught her children to wash their hands often, and she’s hooked antibacterial gels on their backpacks for when they can’t.

“I’m not a germaphobe like some of my colleagues who have put antibacterial lotion all over the place: their cars, their classrooms,” Miller said. “I do feel like some germs are OK.”

Danger zones

Germ candy stores: that’s what [Dr. Harley Rotbart](#), a professor of pediatrics at the University of Colorado and author of the book “[Germ Proof Your Kids](#),” calls schools.

“It is stunning how many times kids touch their faces and then touch other kids,” Rotbart said. “This is a very touchy-feely demographic, and that’s how we share germs. ... And the little

ones don’t have the same exposure to germs that we do, so until their immune systems get built up, they get sick.”

Schools are full of “hot zones” for germs, Rotbart says. “Most people think that’s the bathroom, but it really isn’t. Those get regularly cleaned.”

If he had to rank the germiest places in school, No. 1 would be the drinking fountain. It’s germier than the toilet seat, he says, but “doesn’t get disinfected as much.” Plus, it’s the perfect spot for kids to ingest these microorganisms as they put their mouths on the stream of water -- or right on the fountain itself.

Rotbart suggests teaching students to run the water a little first and then drink. Or better yet, children should bring their own water bottles to school and not share them with anyone.

Cafeteria trays are another germ hot zone. “Those don’t get wiped down nearly as well,” he said, recommending that kids bring the tray to their table and then use hand sanitizer before they pick up their food.

Avoid the ‘Back-to-School Plague’

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“There is a real delicate balance though; we don’t want to make kids paranoid,” Rotbart said. “We need to be prudent. Germs for people who are healthy really aren’t a big deal.”

Staying healthy

Rotbart tells parents to make sure their children get enough rest. School-age children should get 10 to 11 hours of sleep every night, [according to the CDC](#). Sleep deprivation lowers the immune system’s ability to fight off infection.

Exercise, Rotbart says, is another effective way to keep kids healthy. He suggests a daily dose of 40 minutes of running-around time, even in the winter. If it’s cold, children need to keep their jackets zipped and hats on their heads.

“Your mother was right: Studies have shown that people who do bundle up against the cold are less likely to catch colds later on in the year,” Rotbart said.

Your child’s diet also plays an important role in warding off illness. Foods rich in [vitamin C](#) (PDF) don’t keep colds away altogether, but they can shorten the length of a cold. And make sure little Johnny or Julie gets a flu shot early in the season.

In order to stop germs from ever entering the body, [hand-washing is key](#). Every year, Miller invites a nurse to teach her first graders the proper techniques.

“I’ve got a bathroom with a poster

about hand-washing right in my classroom, and if I don’t hear them wash their hands -- even if I’m in the middle of a lesson and the principal is doing my evaluation -- I stop what I’m doing and say, ‘Wash your hands,’ “ Miller said. “It’s that important.”

[Judy Harrison](#), a foods and nutrition professor at the University of Georgia, says studies she’s conducted show that most kids don’t know how to wash their hands properly (only 28% knew the right method). Properly washed hands cut down on gastrointestinal problems, as well as the cold and flu. Harrison designed the [“Wash Your Paws, Georgia!”](#) (PDF) hand-washing initiative.

“I teach them to sing ‘happy birthday’ to yourself twice to make sure they wash for at least 20 seconds,” Harrison said. She also teaches them to clean between their fingers and around their fingernails and to use a clean paper towel or a hot air dryer to dry off.

A lot of people think hand sanitizer is better, she says, but really, washing with soap and water is the most effective way to eliminate germs.

“My kids are obsessed with hand sanitizer,” said Amy Falcone, a seventh-grade science teacher who teaches at Wood Dale Junior High in the suburbs of Chicago. “It’s a part of the school supply list we send home for kids to bring, along with Kleenex. I’d prefer they wash their hands, but I know it will do in a pinch.”

Falcone used to think the “school

plague” was more of an elementary school thing, but with increasing pressure to get good grades, some older students do come to school sick. And that gets others sick.

“I’ve never been a sickly person, but I did catch strep throat about three years ago,” Falcone said. “I’ve never had it in my entire life, but I had it. Got rid of it. Got it again.”

Falcone’s been teaching for more than 20 years. She’s noticed that some of the newer teachers are getting sick more often.

“When you are new, you are killing yourself to impress, and some young teachers really do forget to take care of themselves,” Falcone said.

She advises new teachers to make sure they keep up with their own healthy habits. “Eat healthy, get sleep, do whatever you do to reduce stress.”

Falcone coaches her school’s [Girls on the Run](#) program. It helps her and her students decompress, as well as stay in shape. “That’s especially important for me as a teacher. I can’t really miss school,” she said. “I’ve got kids lined up at my door every morning. I need to be there for them. Staying healthy is totally doable.”

Article by Jen Christensen, CNN

Avoid the 'Back-to-School Plague'

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As millions of children head back to school this month, teachers and parents are dreading the “back-to-school plague.” Schools are full of hot zones for germs, Dr. Harley Rotbart says. Here are his top eight.

- Bathroom doors - Let's start with the bathroom, which most people assume is a germ haven. Not so, Rotbart says, as most school bathrooms are cleaned regularly. The bathroom door is another story: Not all kids wash their hands like they should, so exiting could be hazardous to your health.
- Cafeteria trays - Cafeteria trays rarely get wiped off between meals, Rotbart says. With food and a variety of kids touching them, they can be hosts to some serious germs. Rotbart tells kids to use hand sanitizer after they bring their trays to the table.
- Unrefrigerated lunches - Also dangerous? Sack lunches, which “typically spoil before lunch-time,” Rotbart says. Pack food that needs to be refrigerated in an insulated lunch box with frozen blue ice packs, and freeze any juice boxes. Doing so will lower the chance of food-borne illnesses.
- Desks - Students spend most of the day at their desks. That means any sneezes, coughs, or... nasal leakage ends up all over. Students then touch their desktops and take those germs home to Mom.
- Art supplies - Most art classes have kids share supplies like paintbrushes, markers and scissors. Students often touch these and then touch their faces or pass them to other kids. Plus, cleaning art supplies is not a top priority for teachers, Rotbart says.
- Sports equipment - Your kids might be passing germs along with those winning touchdowns. Worst of all, Rotbart says, is that football and other sports helmets are a good way to spread lice.
- Playground equipment - Germs like to play Ring Around the Rosie on the playground. Any microorganisms on kids' hands get spread to the monkey bars, the slide, the teeter totter, etc. where other children can pick them up.
- Drinking fountains - If Rotbart had to pick the No. 1 germiest place in schools, it would be the drinking fountain. Kids put their mouths right on the spout, which is disinfected even less than the bathroom door. It helps to teach your children to keep their mouths off the metal and to let the water fun for a second before drinking.

Med-Sense Member Perks

MSGA COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIPS

Over the last several years, MSGA has awarded numerous college scholarships to members and their legal dependents. Scholarships will be awarded again this Fall for the 2018-2019 school year. Visit the MSGA Member Website at www.medsensemembersonline.com for complete details, and watch for updates in the coming months.

THRIVE MAGAZINE

MSGA is publishing its first magazine exclusively for Med-Sense members. The magazine will feature articles and information to help you live a healthy lifestyle. Be on the lookout for your copy to arrive this Fall!

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What is the right way to wash your hands:

Follow the five steps below to wash your hands the right way every time.

1. Wet your hands with clean, running water (warm or cold), turn off the tap, and apply soap.
2. Lather your hands by rubbing them together with the soap. Be sure to lather the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails.
3. Scrub your hands for at least 20 seconds. Need a timer? Hum the “Happy Birthday” song from beginning to end twice.
4. Rinse your hands well under clean, running water.
5. Dry your hands using a clean towel or air dry them.

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and association services, call or write:

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Articles are not intended to provide medical advice, diagnosis or treatment.

Consult your doctor before starting
any exercise program.

