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# Healthy Insights

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## Skin Health

You may have noticed that your skin has become thinner, drier, or more wrinkled as you age. This is normal. As people age, they lose sweat and oil glands, collagen and certain proteins. These changes lead to thinner skin that can bruise or tear more easily, and wounds may take longer to heal. Wrinkles also appear mostly due to years of sun exposure. Skin can also become drier with age. These skin changes are common, but there are measures you can take to protect yourself from certain risks.

### Soothing Dry Skin

Dry skin can be caused by too much time in the sun or dry air, not drinking enough water, smoking, stress, or medical conditions like diabetes and kidney disease. Try these tips to soothe dry and itchy skin:

- Use moisturizer daily
- Take fewer baths and showers
- Use mild soap and warm water (rather than hot water)
- Use an air humidifier, especially during the dry winter months

Do not use bath oil in the bath or shower to avoid falling.

### Are Skin Tags and Age Spots Something to Worry About?

As you get older, you may also develop age spots and skin tags. Age spots are unraised, flat spots on the skin



that usually appear on the face, hands, arms, back, and feet. They are caused by years spent in the sun. To avoid these spots, wear broad-spectrum sunscreen daily. Skin tags are small growths of raised skin and are often the same color as your skin. They are more common in women and usually appear on the eyelids, neck, and body folds (armpits, chest, and groin). Both age spots and skin tags are harmless, but skin tags may become irritated.

### How to Spot Skin Cancer

Spending too much time in the sun can lead to skin cancer. There are three types of skin cancer:

- Basal cell carcinoma
- Squamous cell carcinoma
- Melanoma



Example of a Basal cell carcinoma

Basal cell carcinoma and squamous cell carcinoma grow slowly and rarely spread to other body parts. Melanoma is the most dangerous and rarest skin cancer type. It can become deadly as it spreads. You should check your skin once a month for any growths that may be skin cancer. Here's what to look for in a growth:

**A:** Asymmetry (one part of the growth looks different than the other)

**B:** Borders are irregular

**C:** Color changes or more than one color

**D:** Diameter greater than the size of a pencil eraser

**E:** Evolving (changing in size, shape, symptoms [itching, tenderness], surface [bleeding], or colors)

These signs can be easily remembered as the "ABCDEs." If you detect any of these symptoms, see your doctor immediately.

### Additional Tips

Here are some additional steps you can take to keep your skin healthy:

- Limit time in the sun between the hours of 10 AM–4 PM.
- Be careful on cloudy days. The sun's harmful rays can still reach you through the clouds, so always wear sunscreen.
- Use sunscreen with SPF 15 or higher, as well as "broad spectrum" sunscreens. Put sunscreen on 15 to 30 minutes before spending time in the sun and reapply at least every two hours. Reapply more often if you are swimming, sweating, or rubbing your skin with a towel.

- Wear protective clothing, like a hat that can cover your neck, ears, eyes, and head, and sunglasses that block 99%–100% of sun rays. Wear loose, lightweight, long-sleeved shirts and long pants or skirts when in the sun.
- Avoid tanning. Don't use sunlamps, tanning beds, or tanning pills.
- Choose the right cleanser. Look for these qualities when choosing a cleanser:
  - pH balanced
  - Gentle
  - Few ingredients

Skin changes are common with age, but there are ways to protect yourself. Follow these safety precautions, and if anything about your skin worries you, see your doctor.



### Sources

[Skin Care and Aging | NIH | https://bit.ly/4cmqYdt](https://bit.ly/4cmqYdt)

[Caring for patient skin, thinning with age: What you need to know | Medline | https://bit.ly/4ddqIUT](https://bit.ly/4ddqIUT)

*IPRO Healthy Insights* comes from Dr. Clare Bradley, IPRO's Senior Vice President/Chief Medical Officer, a nationally recognized public health advocate.

IPRO is a non-profit organization that works with government agencies, providers and patients to measure and improve healthcare for all. For over 35 years we've made creative use of clinical expertise, emerging technology and data solutions to make the healthcare system work better.



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