

# fight skin cancer while you sleep

...and 10 other surprising ways  
to prevent this deadly disease—beyond  
just slathering on sunscreen.

BY SALLY WADYKA

**➤ you probably know that the sun** is the leading cause of skin cancer (not to mention wrinkles and brown spots), so hopefully you're already shielding yourself from its rays. But you shouldn't stop there. New research shows that a few simple lifestyle changes can further reduce your odds of becoming one of the million new cases this year. To make it easy, we put together a 24/7 protection plan—follow it to stay healthy (and hold onto your youthful air) for years to come.

## IN THE A.M.

**Morning is the time to prepare your skin for battling a day's worth of ultraviolet rays.**

### • **Serve up a better breakfast**

Start the day with a glass of pomegranate juice and top your cereal or yogurt with fresh blueberries; both fruits are high in antioxidant anthocyanins and vitamin C. A diet rich in antioxidants has been proven to help your body defend itself against the damage UV rays can do to your skin cells (i.e., cause mutations in your DNA that lead to skin cancer). Then indulge in that midmorning latte; it has cell-protecting benefits too. "Coffee contains some little known but powerful antioxidants, including caffeic and chlorogenic acids," says Donald Hensrud, M.D., chair of the division of preventive medicine at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota. To avoid the jitters, Hensrud suggests sticking to two cups a day.

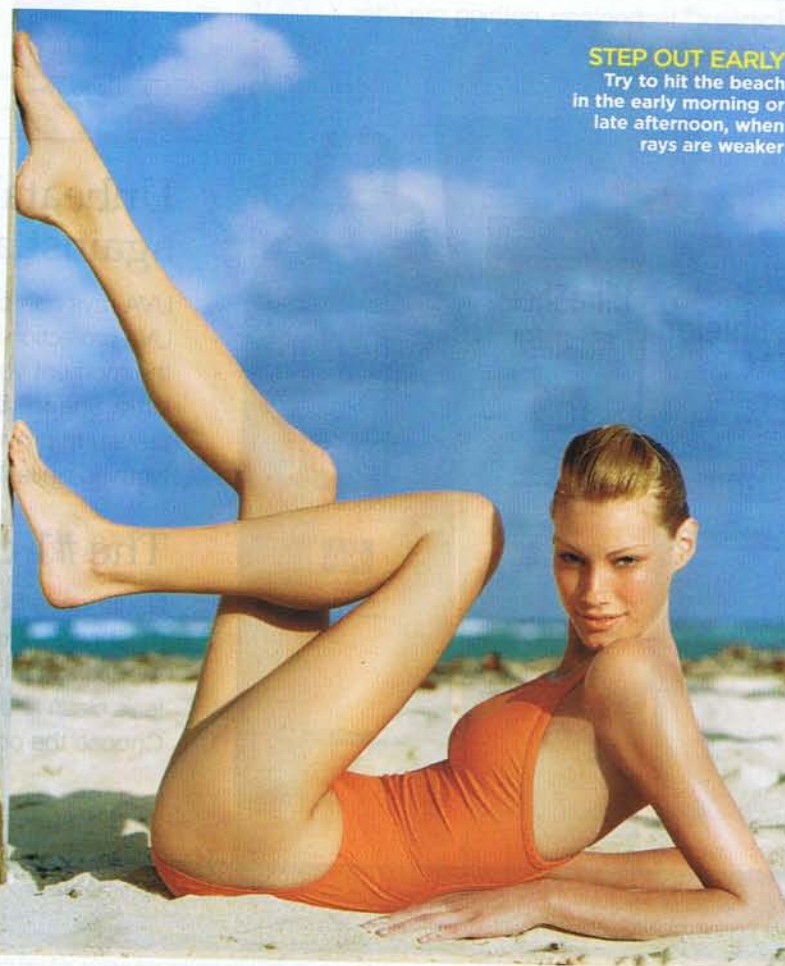
### • **Supplement your protection**

Researchers have found that taking the extract of the South American fern *Polypodium leucotomos* (PL) in supplement form can help halt UV-induced skin damage and skin cancer. "In human studies, PL has been shown to decrease inflammation and prevent cellular mutations and photoaging," says Leslie

Baumann, M.D., a Miami Beach dermatologist. Because PL pills, such as **Heliocare** (\$53 for 60 capsules; [amazon.com](http://amazon.com)), are expensive, Baumann recommends downing three tablets an hour before heading out in the sun (as she does before playing a round of golf), rather than taking them

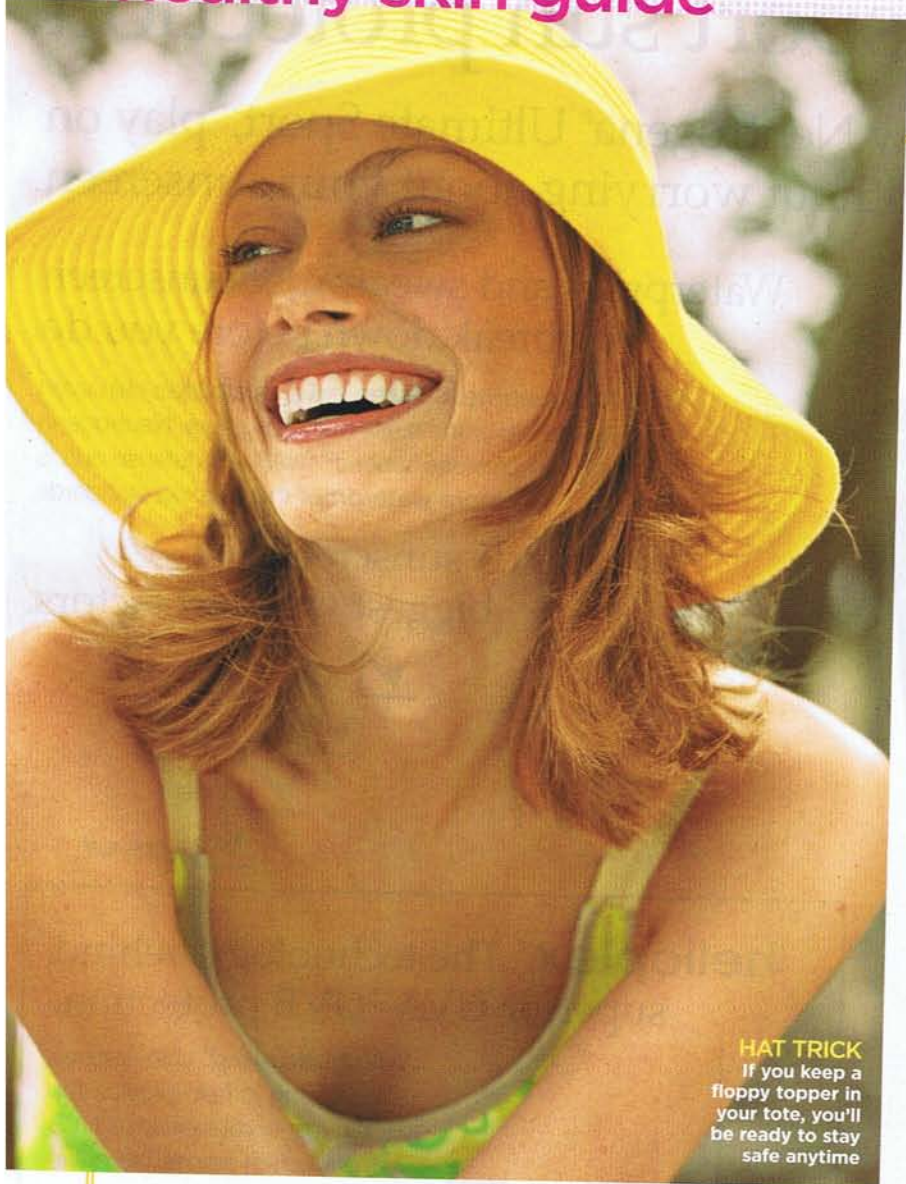
daily. A newer, less costly version that may be as effective: **SunPill** (\$20 for 30 tablets; [sunpill.com](http://sunpill.com)), which also contains PL.

• **Aim for a D** There's a lot of buzz about vitamin D (sometimes dubbed "the sunshine vitamin") these days. Simply put, exposure to UVB rays makes our bodies produce this nutrient, which is said to help prevent many types of cancer. But lest you think that gives you an excuse to spend your days at the beach or on a tanning bed (which increases your risk for the deadliest type of skin cancer, melanoma, by 75 percent if used in your youth), dermatologists are quick to point out that there are better ways to get your D.



## STEP OUT EARLY

Try to hit the beach in the early morning or late afternoon, when rays are weaker



**HAT TRICK**  
If you keep a floppy topper in your tote, you'll be ready to stay safe anytime

"Exposing yourself to a known carcinogen in order to get a healthy nutrient is a trade-off that doesn't make sense," says David E. Fisher, M.D., Ph.D., chief of the Massachusetts General Hospital dermatology department. Still, some experts believe 10 to 15 minutes a day of unprotected sun is enough to generate the amount of vitamin D you need to defend yourself from the disease. In winter, when the sun's not as strong, they recommend you get up to 2000 IUs of the vitamin daily in capsule form (look for D<sub>3</sub>, which is easily absorbed by your body)

or through your diet (a glass of fortified milk provides 98 IU; a serving of salmon, 360 IU).

● **Give your sunscreen a head start**

"Exfoliating regularly makes it easier for the active ingredients in your sunscreen to sink in and work their best," explains Amy Wechsler, M.D., a dermatologist in New York City. Skip this step and dead skin cells will build up and form a hard-to-penetrate barrier. Wechsler recommends sloughing daily from head to toe in the shower with a scrub. Two gentle sloughers: **Peter Thomas Roth Botanical Buffing Beads**

**Body Wash** (\$22; *peterthomasroth.com*) and **Artistry Polishing Scrub** (\$23; *artistrybeauty.com*); both have skin-softening jojoba oil.

● **Smooth on a serum** Applying an antioxidant serum to your face and neck before spreading on sunscreen will also kick your protection up a notch. "The ingredients found in these concentrated formulas—green tea, coffeeberry, and resveratrol, to name a few—help counteract damage under your skin while your sunblock works on the surface to absorb UV rays," says Wechsler. "Used together, they're more effective than either product worn alone." Two to try: **Priori CoffeeBerry Tightening Serum** (\$75; *prioriskincare.com* for stores) and **Caudalie Vinexpert Firming Serum** (\$79; *sephora.com*), with resveratrol. Another option: Streamline your routine by using a foundation with antioxidants and sunscreen, such as **HissyFit Saving Face Anti-Aging Foundation + SPF** (\$49; *hissyfit.com*), with green tea and an SPF of 50-plus.

● **Be a 'screen star**

While changing your lifestyle can enhance all of your anticancer efforts, protecting yourself from the sun (which means using copious amounts of sunscreen) is still your first line of defense against the disease. You need to smooth it on before

A mild exfoliator and potent serum pack a one-two punch against damage



STILL LIFE: NICOLAI GROSELL

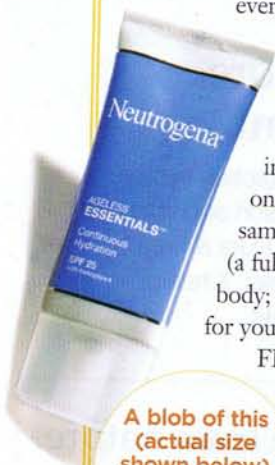
you head out every day, rain or shine (yes, UV rays can penetrate clouds), even if your only exposure is walking from your car to the office. But perhaps even more important

is putting on enough sunscreen to make it work: You'll get the SPF indicated on the label only if you apply the same überthick coating (a full ounce for your body; a nickel-size blob for your face and neck) the FDA uses when it puts sunscreens to the test.

"Studies have shown that people use about half that amount at best," says Henry Lim, M.D., a member of the Skin Cancer Foundation Photobiology Committee.

"This means your SPF 30 might really be giving you closer to SPF 12 or 15." Also aim to spread it on 30 minutes before leaving home to give it a chance to absorb and start working. (If it's a formula that contains only physical blockers, such as titanium dioxide or zinc oxide, you don't have to wait, as these ingredients are effective on contact.)

Can't stand the thought of adding another step to your a.m. regimen? Opt for a daily moisturizer that contains sunscreen, like **Neutrogena Ageless Essentials Continuous Hydration Moisture SPF 25** (\$15; at drugstores), with Helioplex, which offers enhanced UVA and UVB protection, or **Shiseido White Lucent Brightening**



A blob of this (actual size shown below) will cover your face and neck



## SUN-DAY BESTS

Keep your beach bag stocked with shades and a fresh (under a year old) bottle of 'screen



## WHY A YEARLY SKIN CHECK IS NOT ENOUGH

WHILE THE SKIN CANCER FOUNDATION recommends going to a dermatologist once a year for a professional's take on all your moles, most doctors we spoke with urge you to regularly scrutinize your skin as well. "You're the one who knows what's new, what's different, or what's not healing," says Joel Cohen, M.D., director of AboutSkin Dermatology in Englewood, Colorado. So once a month, get naked in front of a full-length mirror and take a close look. Even places that rarely—if ever—see the sun (like underneath your fingernails, your scalp, behind your ears, between your toes, and on your labia) can be prone to cancer. Besides the well-known dangers of a mole that changes shape, color, or size, "a spot that crusts or scabs; a pimple-like lesion that won't heal; or a scaly, rough patch can all be warning signs that you have some form of the disease," says Cohen. In short, if you see something, go to the doctor stat.

**Protective Moisturizer, SPF 16** (\$52; *sephora.com*), which has softening plant extracts and light-reflecting powders to lessen the appearance of brown spots.

● **Brush on your minerals** Mineral finishing powder is a “nice complement to your regular sunscreen, thanks to the UV-shielding ingredients it contains, like titanium dioxide and zinc oxide,” says Deborah Sarnoff, M.D., vice president of the Skin

Cancer Foundation. Basically it’s a backup system for your sunscreen; sweep it all over your face and it will fill in any spots you might have missed with the cream. “It’s also a handy way to reapply your sun protection—say, before you head out to lunch—without washing off your makeup and starting all over again,” explains Sarnoff. A best bet: **Bare Escentuals Multi-Tasking Minerals SPF 20** (\$18; *nordstrom.com*).

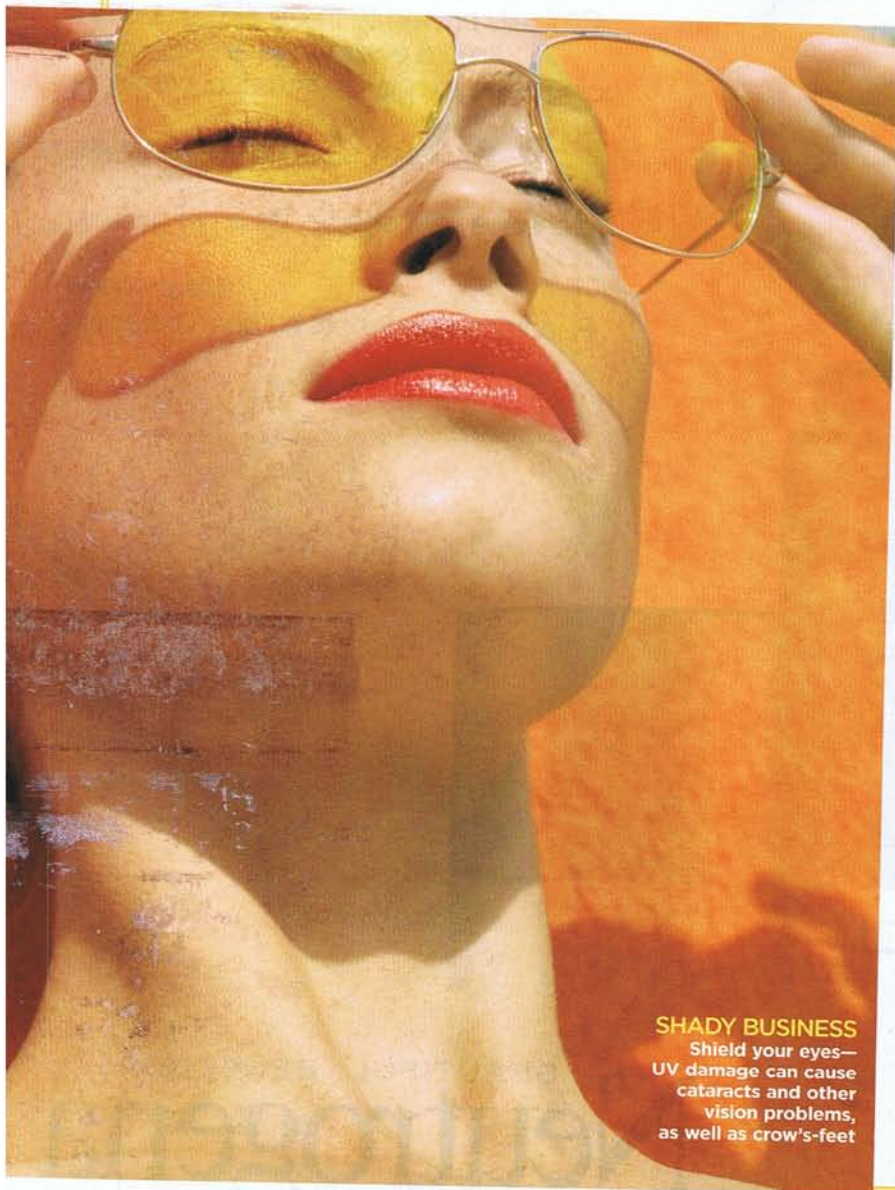
## IN THE P.M.

**Nighttime is when your skin gets to focus on repair, since it’s no longer busy fending off UV rays.**

● **Love your body, love your skin**

Turns out there’s a possible link between exercise and skin cancer—people who do a lot of the former aren’t as apt to develop the disease. According to a recent study from Rutgers University, mice that were given access to a running wheel and then exposed to UVB light were 32 percent less likely to develop tumors than their non-exercising counterparts. Although this is just a mouse study, the researchers theorize the same may hold true for humans. What has been proven: Women who are proud of their shape (i.e., fit women) are far more inclined to look at themselves regularly in the mirror and spot suspicious moles, which could be life-saving when you consider that skin cancers are nearly 100 percent curable when detected early. Count that as yet another reason to get yourself to the gym!

● **Eat like an Italian** Researchers in Italy found that people who follow a Mediterranean diet, rich in foods like dark, leafy greens; tuna; and olives, lower their risk of contracting cutaneous melanoma (the most fatal form of skin cancer). “Many of these foods contain polyphenols [a type of antioxidant] and omega-3 fatty acids, which have been shown to decrease the proliferation of cancer cells,” explains Cristina Fortes, Ph.D., lead author of a study in the *International Journal of Epidemiology* on the Mediterranean diet. So on your way home from work or the gym, swing by the grocery store salad bar and top your creation with a dressing that includes olive oil and fresh herbs.



**SHADY BUSINESS**  
Shield your eyes—UV damage can cause cataracts and other vision problems, as well as crow’s-feet



Find products packed with firming hyaluronic acid and peptides

• **Rejuvenate your cells** You've probably heard that applying a product that contains skin-plumping peptides after cleansing at night can help rebuild sun-damaged collagen fibers. Two we like: **Philosophy When Hope Is Not Enough**

**Replenishing Capsules** (\$50; [philosophy.com](http://philosophy.com)) and **Avon Anew Clinical Derma-Full X3 Facial Filling Serum** (\$54; [avon.com](http://avon.com)). But if you really want to step up your regimen, try topping either of those with one of the newest creams designed to fix damaged DNA—so you can guard against cancer too. **"Remergent DNA Repair**

**Formula** (\$125; [amazon.com](http://amazon.com)) shuts down specific enzymes that target and destroy collagen," says Joel Cohen, M.D., former president of the Colorado

Dermatologic Society. "And studies done on skin cells in labs have shown it may also halt the type of mutations that can lead to basal cell carcinoma." Another cream, **Nia24 Intensive Recovery Complex** (\$110; [nia24.com](http://nia24.com)), uses nicotinic acid (a form of the B vitamin niacin) to stimulate DNA repair.

"Niacin triggers the skin's natural wound-healing response," explains Elaine L.

“when you're asleep, inflammation-healing hormones—endorphins and oxytocin—are at their highest levels.”

Jacobson, Ph.D., a professor of pharmacology and toxicology at the University of Arizona.

• **Get your beauty rest** "When you're asleep, inflammation-healing hormones—endorphins and oxytocin—are at their highest levels," says Wechsler. So do everything you can to ensure you get your eight hours a night. It's no longer just your looks that depend on it, it's your life.

SALLY WADYKA, a contributing editor to *Shape*, lives in Boulder, Colorado.

## DECODE A SUNSCREEN LABEL

Don't let all the confusing promises and unpronounceable ingredients on sunscreen bottles keep you from buying the right one. We asked Deborah Sarnoff, M.D., vice president of the Skin Cancer Foundation, to shed some light on those often tricky-to-understand labels.

**1 KNOW YOUR PROTECTION** The sun is made up of UVB and UVA light—UVB rays cause burning, but both are responsible for the cellular destruction that can lead to skin cancer. **The problem is that "the SPF rating only tells you how much UVB protection you're getting,"** says Sarnoff. Currently there's no similar rating for UVA, but the FDA is working on a star system—that will be used in addition to SPF—to indicate how well a product shields you from UVA. For now, "Look for the words 'broad spectrum' on the label," says Sarnoff. "That's your clue that the product is designed to screen out UVB and UVA rays." You should also scan the ingredients panel for the powerful UVA blockers avobenzene (also called Parsol 1789), oxybenzone, mexoryl, zinc oxide, titanium dioxide, or Helioplex.

**2 AIM HIGH** "Wear an SPF of at least 15 daily," says Sarnoff. **"And step it up to SPF 30 or higher if you're going to be in the sun for a while.** Nothing blocks all UV rays, but SPF 15 will filter out about 93 percent of UVB, while SPF 30 blocks about 97 percent." The latest crop of 70-plus 'screens block out 98.5 percent. Try Neutrogena Ultimate Sport Sunblock Spray SPF 70+ (\$11; at drugstores).

**3 DON'T BELIEVE THE HYPE** "Claims that products are waterproof are misleading. Most manufacturers have switched their labels to say water- or sweat-resistant," says Sarnoff. **That means the product has been proven to maintain its SPF after 40 minutes of swimming or sweating.** But the truth is, no product is going to stay put if you're in the water or perspiring a lot, so reapply every two hours no matter what.