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For More Information About Skin Care and Aging

U.S. Food and Drug Administration
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www.fda.gov

MedlinePlus
National Library of Medicine
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National Cancer Institute
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www.cancer.gov

National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases
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www.niams.nih.gov

Skin Care and Aging

Your skin changes with age. It becomes thinner, loses fat, and no longer looks as plump and smooth as it once did. Your veins and bones can be seen more easily. Scratches, cuts, or bumps can take longer to heal. Years of sun tanning or being out in the sunlight for a long time may lead to wrinkles, dryness, age spots, and even cancer. But, there are things you can do to protect your skin and to make it feel and look better.

Dry Skin and Itching

Many older people suffer from dry spots on their skin, often on their lower legs, elbows, and lower arms. Dry skin patches feel rough and scaly. There are many possible reasons for dry skin, such as:

- Not drinking enough liquids
- Spending too much time in the sun or sun tanning
- Being in very dry air
- Smoking
- Feeling stress
- Losing sweat and oil glands, which is common with age

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 can make dry skin worse.

Some medicines can make skin itchy. Because older people have thinner skin, scratching can cause bleeding that may lead to infection. Talk to your doctor if your skin is very dry and itchy.

Here are some ways to help dry, itchy skin:

- Use moisturizers, like lotions, creams, or ointments, every day.
- Take fewer baths or showers and use milder soap. Warm water is less drying than hot water. Don't add bath oil to your water. It can make the tub too slippery.
- Try using a humidifier, an appliance that adds moisture to a room.

My mind says I'm in
my twenties.
My body says
"Yeah You Wish!"



Bruises

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

Wrinkles

Over time, skin begins to wrinkle. Things in the environment, like ultraviolet (UV) light from the sun, can make the skin less elastic. Gravity can cause skin to sag and wrinkle. Certain habits, like smoking, also can wrinkle the skin. Talk with a doctor specially trained in skin problems, called a dermatologist, or your regular doctor if you are worried about wrinkles.

Age Spots and Skin Tags

Age spots, once called "liver spots," are flat, brown spots often caused by years in the sun. They are bigger than freckles and commonly show up on areas like the face, hands, arms, back, and feet. Using a broad-spectrum sunscreen that helps protect against two types of the sun's rays (UVA and UVB) may prevent more age spots.

Skin tags are small, usually flesh-colored growths of skin that have a raised surface. They become common as people age, especially for women. They are most often found on the eyelids, neck, and body folds such as the armpit, chest, and groin.

Age spots and skin tags are harmless, although sometimes skin tags can become irritated. If your age spots or skin tags bother you, talk to your doctor about having them removed.

Skin Cancer

Skin cancer is a very common type of cancer in the United States. The main cause of skin cancer is the sun. Sunlamps and tanning booths can also cause skin cancer. Anyone, of any skin color, can get skin cancer. People with fair skin that freckles easily are at greatest risk. 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 usually found on parts of the skin most often exposed to the sun, like the head, face, neck, hands, and arms. But they 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 it can spread to other organs and be deadly.

Check your skin once a month for things that may be signs of cancer. Skin cancer is rarely painful. Look for changes such as a new growth, a sore that doesn't heal, or a bleeding mole.

Check Moles, Birthmarks, or Other Parts of the Skin for the "ABCDE's"

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 to make sure it is not skin cancer.

