

8 sneaky things that damage skin

No matter how young we feel on the inside, our skin can always betray our true age. Over time, the structures in our skin become damaged and break down. Furthermore, lifestyle factors such as alcohol and tobacco use, poor diet and sun exposure can make us appear older than we actually are. The National Institutes of Health attributes most skin changes to sun exposure; however, other culprits can also wreak substantial havoc on our dermis. While we can't put the brakes on time and prevent skin aging, there are things we can stop doing to lessen the damage we do to our skin each and every day.

Getting a base tan

We all want to avoid exposing our pasty white skin once shorts season is upon us, leading many to pay a visit to the tanning bed. But it's smart to think twice about that. The *Journal of the American Academy of Dermatology* cites that the UV rays our skin is exposed to in a tanning bed damage skin-cell DNA, have a harmful effect on the eyes and lead to aging. Instead, slather on that high-SPF sunscreen and proudly make your waterside debut. We're all in the same "pasty" boat anyway.

Stressing out

Unfortunately, stress is a part of our daily lives, affecting us in ways we may not even be aware of. In this case, that would be our skin. When we are stressed, our bodies produce a chemical response that causes the skin to become more sensitive and reactive. Stress can also worsen existing skin problems and interfere with daily skin care ([WebMD](#)). Even when times get tough, make sure to take care of your skin and yourself. Practice stress management techniques such as yoga, meditation or breathing exercises. And remember to say 'No' and set boundaries for yourself.

Not covering up

Just because you're in the shade, doesn't mean you're safe from the sun. UV rays bounce off both sand and water, leaving you more at risk, even with that umbrella blocking direct sunlight. Think you're in the clear behind the wheel? Think again. Another little known offense is driving without sunscreen. While we may think the car windows are acting like a sun shield, they're not. Typically, they don't block the UVA rays that cause skin aging ([Forbes](#)).

Wasting away in Margaritaville

Okay, Jimmy Buffet may not have the power to directly harm your skin but sipping margaritas in the sun just might. According to the [Mayo Clinic](#), the skin's exposure to the lime juice in those sweet and salty beverages can cause the skin to undergo phytophotodermatitis, a phototoxic reaction caused by sensitivity to chemicals in certain fruits and plants. When those chemicals get on your skin and are exposed to ultraviolet light, a reaction may occur in the form of a sunburn or rash, which may last for months. Phytophotodermatitis also affects people who exercise outdoors in wooded areas or nature preserves where wild plants grow.

Health and Wellness Article

Ignoring born-on dates

Another common mistake is wearing expired sunscreen; most are good for one to three years. Get into the habit of writing the purchase date on the bottle so you know when to throw it out. As far as storage goes, avoid keeping it in the car, where the ingredients are likely to separate or oxidize, rendering it useless. ([Forbes](#))

Popping pills

If you're taking medication, be wary of sun exposure. Some antibiotics and antihistamines increase the skin's sensitivity to sunlight, intensifying sunburn and causing tissue damage ([Forbes](#)). Make sure to consult with your pharmacist and/or doctor about pills you're taking that may increase your sensitivity and, if need be, avoid the sun all together.

Hot showers

There's nothing better than a long, hot shower. But skin experts warn that we may want to reconsider the frequency of those showers to avoid skin damage. A steamy shower can strip away the outermost layer of the epidermis, leading to dry, scaly skin. Preserve the natural protective oils of your skin by instead taking quick, cool showers. ([Direct Dermatology](#))

Skiping out on exercise

Fitting in daily activity carries with it a host of health benefits, including better skin. Exercising increases blood flow, which distributes oxygen and nutrients throughout the body, nourishing the skin cells along the way. Exercise also helps eliminate waste products from the body, including the free radicals linked to skin aging ([Dermapproved](#)). Even if it's ten minutes here and there, your skin will thank you for it!

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