

Beautiful **SKIN** *To Last a Lifetime*

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Most of us want to look and feel beautiful. Beautiful skin can go a long way toward making us feel like a more beautiful person. As a dermatologist, I look to the skin's beauty with respect to its form, function and feel. The skin is a complex mechanism designed to protect, contain and regulate our bodies. Healthy skin is beautiful skin. Healthy skin is smooth, full and soft. Collagen and elastin, the building blocks of skin become damaged with time, making it dry, wrinkled and loose. By increasing the quantities of collagen and elastin, we can protect and preserve the skin so it stays healthy and beautiful longer.

There are simple things that you can do to help keep your skin be as beautiful as it can be. Hydration is important, not just for health and safety, but for your skin as well. Although there is little scientific evidence to support claims that drinking water will make your skin better, drinking too little can take its toll. The skin's ingredients are bathed in a substance called hyaluronic acid that acts like a sponge. Dry it out and you get a wrinkled sponge. Even more important than the amount of water we drink is how we bathe and care for our skin. When it comes to bathing and showering, once a day for less than 10 minutes is best. Try not to use hot water, as that can dry the skin out. Immediately after bathing or showering, towel the skin gently and apply plenty of moisturizer. Use sunscreen if you plan on being out in the sun. The truth is that moisturizers are what really retain the skin's hydration. If you go in the pool or ocean, rinse off right after and apply moisturizer or sunscreen.

While water and moisturizers help hydrate the skin, sunscreen and clothing protect it. Get the most out of your sunscreen by using a broad spectrum SPF 30 and reapplying every 2-3 hours. Don't fall victim to the myth that your clothes will protect your skin. Most clothing only provides an SPF of 2-8. Many clothes and hats now offer high SPF ratings and are preferred if you plan on being outdoors for long periods of time. While it is a commonly held belief that wearing white clothing reflects the sunlight, just the opposite is true. Darker clothing blocks the sun, while white clothing transmits it to your skin. To see how, just hold a white T-shirt and a black T-shirt up to a light and take note on which one you can see more light through. Another myth is that being under water reduces the sun reaching the skin. The opposite is in fact true. Water magnifies the light from the sun. Do not assume that just because you are under water that you will not get burned

These are simple but effective ways to keep your skin healthy and beautiful. By treating your skin well, its beauty can last a lifetime!

Dr. Todd Schlesinger is the Director of Dermatology and Laser Center of Charleston. Log onto www.dermandlaser.com for more expert beauty tips and to learn more about his practice and procedures.

