

Research Roundup

Sunscreen Can Slow Skin Aging Regardless of Age

Researchers and dermatologists have been trying to get the word out about sunscreen for years — wearing sunscreen regularly has been shown to reduce the risk of skin cancer. However, new studies show it is even more beneficial. Wearing sunscreen daily reduces the effects of photoaging — skin damage due to ultraviolet (UV) radiation, including dark spots, wrinkles and leathery skin.

While dermatologists made claims in the past about the added benefits of wearing sunscreen, there wasn't evidence supporting these claims. Now, however, a four and one-half year study done in Australia revealed regular application of sunscreen significantly slowed the skin's aging. The participants were under the age of 55 and were assigned to one of four groups. The study chose to use middle-aged and younger participants so their skin damage was caused mostly by photoaging and not by old age. Two groups were assigned to wear sunscreen on their head, neck, arms and hands every morning, reapplying it after heavy sweating, bathing, or being outside for more than a few hours. One of these two groups took 30 mg of beta-carotene daily, and the other took a placebo. The remaining two groups were told to apply sunscreen at their own discretion. One group was assigned to take the beta-carotene and the other the placebo.

Every three months, skin surface replicas were made of the participant's back left hand and were graded on a scale of one to six, with one being undamaged skin. Those randomly assigned to daily sunscreen use were 24% less likely to show increased aging than those who were randomly assigned to use sunscreen at their own discretion, no matter the participant's age. The study even reports the daily sunscreen group showed no detectable increase in aging at the study's conclusion. In the study, the beta-carotene and placebo groups showed no significant differences in aging.

