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Derms Agree: This Is The One Ingredient You Should Never Use On Sun-Damaged Skin



We've all had those summer days when we lost track of time and spent too much time outside without applying sunblock. A few bad sunburns here and there aren't the end of the world, but repeated extreme sun exposure could cause lasting damage and leave you susceptible to issues like aging and skin cancer. Skin is an organ, and it is important to learn to care for it like you would the rest of your body. While this starts with taking proper precautions when exposed to sunlight and eating well, being thoughtful with the products you use is also an important step. If you have sun damaged skin, your regimen may shift a little.

It is important to understand what sun damage means and encompasses. Sun damage doesn't just go away after your sunburn heals. **"If you repeatedly expose yourself to the sun without proper protection, this causes long term cosmetic and health damage to the skin. It can result in melanoma, a potentially harmful skin cancer and premature aging," says Dr. Michael Horn, Board Certified Chicago, Illinois Plastic Surgeon.** We all know the tell tale signs of a sunburn (warm, sensitive, red skin), but the sun can still cause significant damage even if it isn't visible. "When one has a sunburn, it may set off an alarm bell for the sun worshipper, but the damage will still show in the future for those who don't burn." This damage can show itself through things like changes in skin texture, crow's feet, leathery skin, upper face wrinkles, broken capillaries, redness, and sagging.

So how should you care for sun damaged skin? The most important thing to do is maximize moisture. “If your skin is already sun-damaged, the last thing you want to do is dry it or use products when in the sun that make it more photosensitive. Alcohol can also damage your skin's natural barrier, making it hard for your skin to retain moisture.” Dr. Horn says. When you have sun damage, you should avoid any alcohol based or drying products so that you avoid further irritation.

You may think that the damage is done after a sunburn and there's no point to bother with sunscreen, but Dr. Horn urges the importance of using it even still, specifically one with an SPF of 30 or more. “It needs to have broad- spectrum coverage to ward off UVA rays responsible for premature aging, and UVB rays that can lead to skin cancer. Most people do not use sufficient sunscreen and forget to reapply it after they sweat, swim, or go out on a cold or cloudy day.” Sunscreen is an important part of your morning routine if you plan on being outside at all during the day.

Luckily, there's always time to minimize further damage and invest in the longevity of your skin. According to the Skin Cancer Foundation, those under 40 have only had about 47 percent of their lifetime sun exposure. “Using ingredients like alpha hydroxy acids, retinol, and Vitamin C can help reduce wrinkles and dark spots caused by sun exposure. The earlier you start to reverse the damage, the easier it will be for your skin to rebound.” Dr. Horn says. He also

recommends niacinamide as another key ingredient for sun damage as it stimulates the skin-barrier function and promotes healing and protection simultaneously. However, if your skin isn't responding to topical solutions, you should consider seeking the help of a board-certified plastic surgeon or dermatologist that can consult with you about more state of the art treatments.

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