



## **A dermatologist tells us why UV protection keeps us looking good for longer**

**Smile lines are endearing, but as soon as we hit our mid-20s these wrinkles are clearer to see, even when we have nothing to laugh about. They're usually the result of spending time in the sun without ever protecting your face and the sensitive skin around the eyes – and the longer you spend in the sun, the more likely it is you'll damage your skin.**

"The face is the body's sun deck," says Dr. Dirk Meyer-Rogge, dermatologist and anti-aging specialist in Karlsruhe, Germany. "People who don't start protecting their skin from the sun while they're young will often suffer the consequences when they hit 30." Such consequences can include wrinkles around the eyes, also known as crow's feet, which are no more than simply deep expression marks.

Depending on your skin type, these wrinkles may begin to appear from the age of 25. By age 30 at the latest, most will notice that the skin around their eyes no longer looks as fresh and smooth as it once did. This is because the skin is particularly sensitive as it's very thin on the eyelids and the temples.

What's more, the eyes are involved in the way we express ourselves, and tiny muscles work to keep them moving. While this stretching does train the tiny muscles, as the skin gets thinner with age these strong muscles cause the wrinkles to become deeper and deeper.

When we stop growing at around the age of 25, the connective tissue under our skin starts to lose its ability to regenerate. In addition, young skin stores water, which imparts a cushion effect as well as a healthy glow. However, the connective tissue's ability to store water wears down with age, so the soft skin around our eyes gets thinner and thinner.



People who protect their skin properly definitely have something to smile about



## **The dark side of the sun: skin damage and cancer**

Sunlight can be even more dangerous, and UV radiation is the skin's number one enemy. Its rays are able to penetrate deep into the skin and damage the connective tissue, which means cells die and they produce less collagen – which makes the skin stretchy. This causes the skin to age; many wrinkles appear and the skin becomes dry and thin. Further damage includes saggy, cracked skin, sun spots and pigmentation. Women frequently experience the latter when they go out in the sun during pregnancy, or while taking certain types of birth control or during menopause.

"But it often doesn't stop at harmless sun spots or a few wrinkles," warns Dr. Meyer-Rogge. Small red spots that at first glance appear to be pigment spots could turn out to be actinic keratosis – early-stage skin cancer. Five to ten percent of all skin cancer cases affect the sensitive eyelids; men often experience actinic keratosis on the forehead and scalp.

"That's why you should always consult a dermatologist if you notice spots after a beach vacation or at the end of the summer. I'd like to see my patients once a year for a checkup," says Dr. Meyer-Rogge. Today, the number of cases of white skin cancer, the most common type, is quickly rising because the skin never gets a break: "People aged 50 and upwards, whose skin is already stressed, tend to go on a cruise or spend time in sunny climates during the winter," explains Meyer-Rogge. This means 90 percent of all white skin cancer cases occur on the face. Surgery isn't a great option as it often leaves unsightly scars.

That's why it's important to take care of the skin around your eyes, and certainly to protect it from the sun. "I'm a big fan of sunglasses!" says the expert. While sunblock and day creams with a sun protection factor do help, Dirk Meyer-Rogge protects his skin in a different way: he's an avid triathlete and when training outdoors he wears a cap with a sweatband, and protective eyewear. "You can put sun cream on your eyelids, too, but the lotion might run into your eyes, which can be painful. That's why it's better to protect yourself another way, i.e. by wearing a hat and glasses, and ideally a sweatband or a headband as well." If you don't fancy wearing a hat, you should apply cream on your face as early as possible, so at least 30 minutes before you play sports or go outside.

You should definitely wear a good pair of sunglasses with sufficient UV protection, i.e. for wavelengths up to 400 nanometers (look out for this when purchasing). The lenses shouldn't be too thin and the sides should be as close to your temples as possible. This will ensure both your skin and eyes are protected, because the sun can even damage the eyes: as we get older, UV exposure contributes to the clouding of the lens. The result is cataracts, a common affliction among people aged 50 and over.



UV radiation doesn't just affect the skin and eyes on a clear day, it can also make its way through the clouds. In the summer, our faces are exposed to harmful UV rays all day long. That's why ZEISS clear lenses offer complete UV protection up to 400 nm, without compromising the clarity of the lenses. The lenses thus offer complete protection against harmful UV rays, as well as outstanding clarity for uncompromising vision.



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