

# Healthier Solutions Newsletter

Spring 2010

As I write this, there are snow flakes blowing around outside and my birdbaths are all filled with frozen water. My friends and family think I'm nuts because I'm still enjoying the snow. However, I spent most of my adult life living in the tropics. There are still times when I miss that year-round summertime, but in truth, I love the changing seasons.

Not much can compare to the gorgeous transformation that magically changes soggy brown vegetation into the blooming colors of March, April, and May.

All this year's winter weather makes it a little hard to realize that spring is really just around the corner. Thankfully, spring fever hasn't hit me yet, though it may have by the time you read this. For now, I am content to browse the seed catalogs and gardening magazines that are starting to appear in my mail box—the one kind of junk mail that I enjoy looking through. I know that before long, I'll be digging, planting and enjoying being outside again.

That thought brings me to the subject of sunlight. I am a firm believer in the broad range of benefits that we derive from being out in the sunshine, so I have added a special section to this issue dedicated to helping you understand why sunshine is vital to us, and how you can enjoy it to its fullest. There are several excerpts from previous articles, with updated information to reflect the most recent findings.

There are several holidays and celebrations worthy of recognition during the spring months, including St. Patrick's Day, Passover, Easter, April Fool's Day, Earth Day, Mother's Day, and Memorial Day. Then there are the lesser known holidays such as National Nutrition Month (March), Red Hat Society Day (April 25), First Day of Spring (March 20), and, I kid you not, Be Kind to Lawyers Day (April 13).

For me, the major event of this spring will be the graduation of my youngest from high school. After so many years of end-of-the-school year activities, this one will be a bittersweet one for me.

Regardless of your family's celebration customs, spring offers many good opportunities to share meaningful time, food, conversations, and fun with family and friends. These social interactions are keys to our health and enjoyment of life. I hope you'll make a point of creating memories with those you love and enjoy being with.



## In This Issue: Spring 2010

I Think You Should Know	2
The Truth About: Pay Now or Pay Later	3
Check It Out	4
From My Kitchen	5
Zinc	6
Guest Article: Reiki	7
The Sun Exposure Special Section	
Sunshine and Vitamin D	8
Safe Sun Exposure	9
The Truth About: Sunscreens	10
Sunscreens & Sunburns	11
The Last Word	12

## I Think You Should Know . . .

*“Believe it or not, the little bear you have in your pantry might not actually contain pure honey. Instead, it could contain a lot high fructose corn syrup and less actual honey than you think and still be labeled as pure, ...It might have come from foreign sources that have little or no health and safety oversight. It could even contain dangerous antibiotics that have been banned for human consumption by the FDA. Impure and dangerous honey from China has been found in places as close as Iowa.”* Wisconsin Representative Phil Garthwaite, referring to a honey label regulation bill he is sponsoring.

As many as 30 million Americans may suffer from celiac disease or significant degree of gluten intolerance, and experience symptoms such as digestive discomfort, diarrhea, constipation, fatigue, joint pain, and so forth. Gluten intolerance is fairly common, yet it takes an average of 11 years for the disease to be diagnosed once the individual begins to seek an answer to his or her digestive problems. The treatment is to eliminate dietary gluten. I facilitate support groups in Kingsport and in Johnson City for people in the Tri-Cities area who have celiac or gluten intolerance. Please contact me, or go to my website FYI page for time and location information.

Multiple studies show that the benefits of coffee include reduction in the risks of diabetes and colon cancer. Unless you are particularly sensitive to caffeine, it appears 1-2 cups of coffee a day are perfectly acceptable and may, in fact, contribute to healthy longevity. More on coffee in a coming issue.

Recent research finds that even high dose fish oil supplementation can be used in combination with blood thinners like clopidogrel (Plavix) and warfarin (Coumadin). (Am J Cardiol 09;104:1052-1054) This is great news because the benefits of omega 3 fatty acids include improved cognitive function and better overall health.

Studies on essential oils continue to reveal interesting findings. Taking exams? Peppermint helps increase scores and citrus oils used during study time improve memory. Sage also improves recall. Contact me for more information on choosing or ordering high quality essential oils.

Cholesterol is vital to our bodies. For example, increasing total cholesterol by 20% reduces the risk of gallstones by over 33%. (see more info on cholesterol in past newsletters —go to the website Newsletter link and that page's index)

### **Saturated Fats**

Saturated fats like butter have been vilified for years now, but there are many of us who consider moderate intake of healthy natural fats to be important. Cholesterol is vital for healthy brain function and hormone production at every stage in life. Saturated fats are required to utilize other fatty acids like the Omega 3's we hear so much about. Saturated fat even lowers harmful lipoprotein a .

The Multiple Risk Factor Intervention Trial followed over 12,000 men for 12 years to determine risk factors for coronary heart disease mortality. The ones with good habits such as low cholesterol and reduced saturated fat diets showed only marginal reduction in heart disease, but showed significantly increased mortality from all causes. Similar results have been found in other studies.

Cholesterol and saturated fats are essential for growth and development in infants and children. Mother's milk is extremely high in both. Surely that is no accident or mistake, yet the powers that be are now recommending low cholesterol and low fat diets for all children. Recent studies are linking low-fat diets with a life threatening condition known as “failure to thrive”.

Find out why I and other nutrition experts wish you would tune out the low-fat diet gurus, and eat more like we did a few generations ago. Coming in the Summer issue.

Information contained in this newsletter is not intended as a diagnosis, prescription, or treatment for any illness or disease, physical or mental, nor is it intended to be a substitute for regular medical care from a licensed physician.

## The Truth About . . . Pay Now or Pay Later

*Pay Now or Pay Later.* This simple statement has been my mantra for many years. While similar to its corollary, *you get what you pay for*, my version goes a little further and becomes more appropriate by the day.

This, on a day in which Wal-Mart and Claire's pull children's jewelry from their shelves due to the discovery that they are 10- 91% cadmium, a dangerous heavy metal. Cadmium is a neurotoxin, known to affect brain development, cause cancer, destroy bone, and numerous additional serious health problems—news that comes on the heels of numerous reports of lead paint in toys, deadly toxic melamine in infant formula and pet foods, and High Fructose Corn Syrup in honey. I feel less crazy now for my reluctance to purchase stainless steel products made anywhere except the US, Germany, or Switzerland. My concern was (and is now confirmed!) that countries like China have proven more than willing to sacrifice the well-being of their own citizens and ours in the name of making easy money, and using contaminated metals would likely not be off limits as long as it wasn't discovered. Until hundreds or thousands had been harmed or died, who would know?

When I say, *Pay Now or Pay Later*, I mean that unless you are willing to pay more for quality products now, you will likely pay a much higher price later in loss of health, loss of independence, and possibly, early loss of life. It doesn't matter if you are talking about buying food, mattresses, toys, or anything else, you may get a lot more than you bargained for if you choose cheap over quality. Will the money you "saved" by buying cheaper pay the medical bills later? Can it buy back your life?

Cheap PVC shower curtains, for example, have been exposed as a major issue. During the first month, a new PVC curtain releases at least 108 VOC's (volatile organic compounds), creating toxicity that is 16 times greater than the limit established by the U. S. Green Building Council for indoor air. Off-gassing may continue for many weeks. At least 7 of the chemicals found are considered hazardous by the EPA. Phthalate plasticizers add to the toxicity. Headaches, nausea, liver & kidney damage, respiratory irritation, loss of coordination, and other central nervous system disorders may result.

Some companies are voluntarily changing their products, but glass doors, or curtains made of nylon or natural materials are better options. Of course, you can pick up a new PVC liner or curtain at the dollar store, while a canvas or linen curtain could put you back \$50. But, realize that the \$1 curtain could end up costing you years of health problems and thousands of dollars in doctor's bills. In the end, what will you have saved? More importantly, what will you have lost?

In Latin America, Europe, India, and other countries, children are given quality pieces of gold or silver jewelry at young ages. These pieces are worn nearly daily, then, as they are outgrown, they are put away and saved for the girl's own future children. Quality is given preference over quantity. The cheap jewelry children use here rarely survives more than a few months, and becomes part of the throwaway mentality. It turns out some of that junk could be responsible for ruining the future health of countless young people.

I am well aware that organic food generally is more expensive than conventional food, but it is also higher in nutrients and does not contain the hormones, antibiotics, or additives known to increase the risks of cancer, endocrine problems, kidney and liver disease, and dozens of other serious ailments. My family is rarely sick. We spend close to nothing on medical bills and I am willing to bet that we are in better health than 90% of the population. Even our dog eats only organic food. Genes are helpful, *but you really are what you eat*, and I consider the extra money spent on organic food to be an investment in ongoing good health. The same goes for our organic bedding and personal care products.

There are hidden benefits to buying better quality products. You make more careful choices, and are less likely to waste or buy something you don't really need. You find ways to get the most from the products you have, instead of buying a series of practically disposable cheap items.

The biggest obstacle I have encountered is finding quality "made to last" versions of certain products. Replacement parts turn out to be costlier than the original item, accessories cease to be available, or new ones don't fit older items. Still, in many cases, it is possible to find well made quality products.

Buying locally whenever possible is another *win/win* strategy that helps us all. For example, I am still using the honey I bought at the Farmer's Market last fall. The price was great, I know it is pure, I help support local business, and I boost my health.

Please consider my *Pay Now or Pay Later* philosophy, and read all labels carefully before you purchase anything. Don't be swayed by marketing and misleading claims. Where did it come from? Is there a safer or more local option available? Isn't your future health worth investing in today?

## Check It Out

This is the first time I have repeated a title in my book recommendations, but this one is worth repeating.

*Nourishing Traditions* is the cookbook I wish I had written. This book has it all, traditional wisdom, lost techniques (like soaking grains to remove phytates), and ideas for adapting traditional recipes for your family's modern lifestyle.

Seeds, nuts, and eggs are incredible packages of complete nutrition. Think about it, these are self contained concentrations of all the building blocks needed to grow a complete new organism. They lend themselves to many culinary variations, and *Nourishing Traditions* will show you imaginative and delicious ways of incorporating them into your daily meals.

There was often valid reason and wisdom behind the use of specific cooking methods. This holds true for hundreds of dishes eaten around the world, and it is not unusual even today to find health problems resulting from the modernization of food preparation. I have become very interested in how soaking grains may impact our ability to digest them, for example, and will let you know how my experimentations go.

The commercialization of grinding corn into grits (over one hundred years ago) is an example I mentioned last year. By leaving out the traditional step of soaking the corn in lime before hand grinding, niacin in corn is not released for absorption.

The result was an epidemic of the disease pellagra, especially in the South following the civil war. By 1929, pellagra was one of the leading causes of death in the US. After discovering that niacin deficiency was to blame, products were fortified with niacin and the disease was practically eliminated. Fortification is better than nothing, but I can't help but think that nature's original nutrition has to be optimal for our bodies.

I wonder how many other vital bits of food wisdom have been lost over the centuries. There are still a few steps I take in my own kitchen because my grandmother taught me to do things a certain way. I know that eventually science will reveal the validity of the reasons behind some of her traditional methods.

## Nourishing Traditions

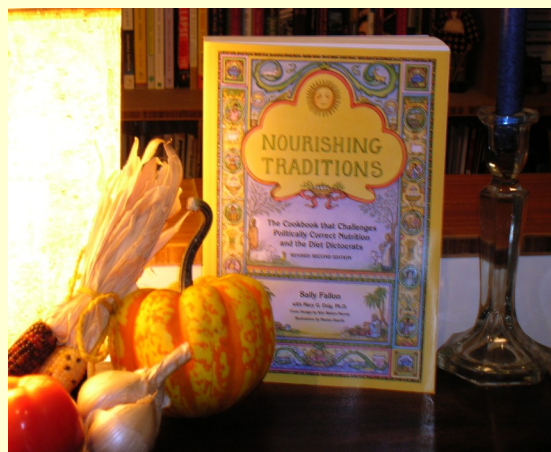
### The Cookbook that Challenges Politically Correct Nutrition And the Diet Dictocrats

Revised Second Edition

By Sally Fallon with Mary G. Enig, Ph.D

Offering delicious traditional recipes from all over the world, along with modern innovations, this cookbook is interesting to read even if cooking really isn't your thing. I assume that eating appeals to most people, and if you are reading this newsletter, you probably want to eat healthy at least some of the time.

The food factoids that are slipped into every page are fascinating, and the glossary, indices, and resource listings will lead you to keep this book close at hand on the nearest shelf.



## From My Kitchen:

Once upon a time, asparagus was in my childhood top ten of despised vegetables (along with peas and mushrooms) Then, one of my mother's friends served me a plate of freshly steamed stalks which she had cut from her garden only hours before. My previous experience had been limited to the canned variety. Wow! My eyes and taste buds were forever opened to the brilliant colors, flavors, and textures of garden fresh produce. Now, as I anxiously await my first real asparagus harvest, I look forward to enjoying them lightly steamed, oven roasted, and many other ways throughout the coming months. And, yes, I also now love fresh peas and mushrooms, as well—but still find the canned varieties inedible. Frozen veggies are the next best thing to fresh, and I have found frozen asparagus to be remarkably good, especially when sautéed or roasted.

### Fresh Asparagus Soup

This soup is delicious warm or chilled, and is especially suited to larger or less tender stalks of asparagus.

2 TBS butter  
2TBS extra virgin olive oil  
1 medium onion, chopped  
½ tsp sea salt  
½ tsp curry powder  
¼ tsp ginger powder  
zest and juice from 1 lemon (in separate dishes)  
2 C diced and peeled red potatoes  
3 C low sodium chicken or vegetable broth  
1 C coconut milk  
2 C asparagus, woody part removed and cut into ½ inch slices

#### Creamy Garnish

¼ C crème fraiche or plain yogurt  
2 TBS chopped chives or scallion greens

Mix together and set aside.

- 1) Sauté the onion in the butter and oil in a large pot over medium heat. Add a pinch of the salt and cook, stirring often, until the onion begins to turn golden—5-6 minutes.
- 2) Stir in the curry and ginger powders, the lemon zest and the potatoes, and cook for 2-5 minutes, stirring often to blend the flavors well.
- 3) Add the broth, coconut milk, and asparagus and bring to a simmer. Loosely cover and continue to cook for 10-15 minutes until the potatoes and asparagus are tender.
- 4) Remove from heat and puree with an immersion blender (my absolute “can’t live without it” kitchen tool!) Or, puree in batches in a blender.
- 5) Add lemon juice and season to taste with salt and pepper.
- 6) Garnish with a swirl or dollop of the chive/yogurt mix. Serve and enjoy!

Asparagus is an excellent source of folate, vitamin K, fiber, potassium, rutin, and many additional vitamins, minerals, and flavonoids. It supports healthy cholesterol ratios, good liver function, vascular strength, and circulation. Asparagus offers anti-inflammatory action and promotes healthy gut bacteria. For many people, it is a natural diuretic. The low calorie content is a bonus! Asparagus can cause urine to have an odd odor due to sulphur compounds, but this is temporary and harmless.

**One cautionary note about asparagus:** it is high in purines, which means it can trigger gout or kidney problems in certain sensitive individuals.

## Zinc

Zinc isn't a mineral that tends to attract much attention, but it should. Our bodies require zinc to activate over 100 enzymes, which in turn impact thousands of biochemical reactions. Zinc is required for healthy immune system function, healthy cognitive and brain function, and the growth and repair of all cells and tissues.

The numbers of Americans who may be deficient in zinc is unknown, though estimates run as low as 10% and as high as 60%. Considering that even moderate deficiency can result in significant health problems, the consequences could be much more far reaching than most people, including medical professionals, realize.

Zinc is present in hundreds of foods, so it would seem easy to meet our modest needs. However, the vast majority of the zinc containing grains we consume are also very high in phytates. It is important that you know about phytates (forms of phytic acid), because these substances bind to many minerals including iron, calcium, magnesium, copper, and zinc, making them unavailable for absorption in the small intestine.

Traditionally, grains were only consumed following long periods of soaking, sprouting, or fermentation. These ancient methods of preparation allowed the phytic acid to be acted on and broken down by enzymes and various helpful organisms, including lactobacilli. This "predigestion" allows optimal digestion and absorption of nutrients and minerals like zinc. Modern grain processing and cooking rarely involves these processes which means that we may be unable to absorb minerals like zinc, even when they are present in the food.

Vegetarians and health conscious individuals may, ironically, be at particularly high risk due to their high intake of whole grains. Learn about this at: <http://www.westonaprice.org/Be-Kind-to-Your-Grains...And-Your-Grains-Will-Be-Kind-To-You.html>, or see the cook book, *Nourishing Traditions* by SF Morell. (on page 4 of this issue)

**Even mild to moderate zinc deficiency can result in a wide variety of consequences** that include: loss of taste and smell, impaired immune system function, poor wound healing and skin health, diarrhea, macular degeneration (wet & dry), connective tissue disorders, hair loss, impotence, increase in inflammatory cytokines, increased risk of pneumonia and COPD, and much more. Zinc is crucial for reproductive organ health and is seriously associated with the natural killer cells that impact cancer risk.

—***"we recommend further studies and propose that zinc should be utilized in the management and chemoprevention of cancer."*** ( [J Am Coll Nutr.](#) 2009 Jun;28(3):257-65.)

**The following either increase the excretion of zinc or interfere with its absorption, or both:**

Diuretic drugs, antibiotics and some anti-inflammatory medications, supplemental iron, alcoholic beverages, and some fortified foods. Persons with high whole grain intake or digestive disorders such as gluten intolerance are at risk for multiple mineral deficiencies including zinc.

Women who are pregnant or nursing should be especially aware, as studies have demonstrated that zinc deficiency can affect not only the current generation, but may impact immune function in subsequent generations even when zinc intake is adequate in those generations!

The therapeutic use of zinc in treating angina pectoris is especially interesting, as it appears to allow LDL cholesterol to function correctly within arteries, decreases arteriosclerosis, and restores cardiac function.

Consider the following article excerpt: Impact of the discovery of human zinc deficiency on health. Wayne State University School of Medicine, PMID: 20150599 [PubMed - in process]

*"...High phytate content of the cereal proteins consumed ...results in decreased availability of zinc for absorption. .. Beneficial therapeutic responses of zinc supplementation have been observed in acute diarrhea in children, chronic hepatitis C, ... and common cold. Zinc ...was effective in decreasing incidences of infection in elderly ... effective in preventing blindness in 25% of the elderly with dry type of age related macular degeneration. ...and it plays an important role in cell-mediated immune functions and oxidative stress. Zinc is also an anti-inflammatory agent. ... significant therapeutic benefits in several diseases in humans. ... atherosclerosis, several malignancies, neurological disorders, and auto-immune diseases. It is therefore, important that status of zinc is assessed and zinc deficiency corrected in these chronic diseases. A controlled clinical trial of zinc supplementation ... and therapeutic effects of zinc is warranted."*

**Zinc supplementation must be managed carefully, because too much zinc is toxic.** The balance of zinc and copper is critical as each mineral competes for absorption with the other. For the average healthy adult, I usually recommend approximately 15 mg of zinc per day, but this amount varies with the individual. Higher doses can be taken for short periods of time, but again, megadoses are **not** a good idea.

Reiki is a form of healing where the practitioner's hands are placed on different parts of the body and energy is directed to the recipient. It's ancient roots go back to Tibet and was rediscovered in the nineteenth century by a Japanese monk, Dr. Mikao Usui . Dr. Usui was a learned man honored for his many good deeds to humanity. In his search for truth and healing he studied from many different sources including Christianity, Buddhism and Shintoism. Reiki is an energy force which flows through all life and is all around us. The word Reiki comes from two roots, one "rei" means divine or universal consciousness and the other "ki" means life force.

The Reiki practitioner acts as a conduit to this energy. The healing benefits of Reiki are enhanced by both the intention of the practitioner and the openness of the receiver. During treatments a peaceful and caring connection forms between the practitioner and the receiver. When the body is relaxed it enhances its natural ability to heal itself. People will often say after receiving Reiki that their tension is reduced and pain is lessened. Lost energy is replenished and a feeling of revitalization can occur. Since Reiki works with the body's natural healing abilities it can be easily incorporated with other healing treatments such as, reflexology, massage, and counseling. It can even be used alongside treatments in western medicine, and can aid in normal recovery. Reiki can also be used effectively on pets. Animals are especially sensitive to the effects of energy as well as a person's intention. Usually a little bit of Reiki goes a long way with them.

As touched on before, Reiki is an effective therapy to use in conjunction with counseling. When the body and mind go into a deep state of relaxation this enables the person to go into themselves to a more insightful level. By doing this mental and emotional blocks can be more easily identified. Reiki influenced counseling can facilitate more clarity of mind and result in more profound self understanding. When in this relaxed state a sense of balance between ones mind, body, emotions and spirit will often occur. And when all these are in balance the ability to live life to it's fullest is improved.

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## Sunshine and Vitamin D

Exposure to fresh air and sunshine boosts natural vitamin D, and promotes good oxygenation of the body. The immune system cannot function adequately without vit. D, and we now know that one reason flu sea-son peaks here in Jan-Feb is because that's when our bodies' levels of D are at their lowest. People world-wide who have the most sun exposure or dietary intake of D have the lowest rates of respiratory and viral infections like colds, flu, and pneumonia. Heliotherapy (sun therapy) was once used successfully for diseases like tuberculosis and psoriasis, and is back in use in many countries

In addition, it is known for improving melatonin levels, and regulating mood. These, in turn, improve sleep quality and immune system function.

Dr. Michael Holick, PhD, MD, a vit. D expert, believes D deficiency is one of the most commonly over-looked medical conditions, and one that leaves us vulnerable to a wide variety of serious health problems, including all the ones mentioned above. You can read more about his work at [www.uvfoundation.org](http://www.uvfoundation.org) .

We and our children spend more time indoors than ever before in history, and we tend to cover up or use sunscreens when we do go out. Cholesterol lowering diets and drugs affect our ability to make D, even in the presence of sunshine. We simply were not designed to live this way, and we are suffering the consequences.

**Dozens of studies now confirm that at least 40-65% of the US population is vit. D deficient.**

**Nursing homes studies reveal that up to of 80% of residents are commonly vitamin D deficient.**

I believe that consistent, moderate sun exposure is one of the most healthful lifestyle habits you can have, resulting in lower rates of cancer, osteoporosis, diabetes, dementia, respiratory disease, colds, flu, depression, insomnia, and more. Worldwide, daily sunbaths are standard for maintaining health at every age. Even in the tropics, newborns are sunned, often fully unclothed, for 5-10 minutes every day. This eliminates or prevents diaper rash, and resolves the jaundice that some newborns develop. Their mothers experience lower rates of post-partum depression. Coincidence? Not at all.

**Benefits outweigh risks by at least 15:1.** According to William B. Grant, PhD, of the Sunlight, Nutrition, and Health Research Center, even if you take into account the small risk of sun related skin cancer, the benefits of natural sunlight exposure outweigh that risk by at least 15 to 1.

**Let's talk about how to get your skin accustomed to healthy sun exposure, while minimizing or eliminating the potential negative effects.**

First, a primer about skin color and ancestral latitude location. The closer to the equator your heritage, the darker your skin is likely to be. Native Africans, Indians, and Aborigines are exposed to long days of intense sun all year around. Their darker skin, eyes, and hair protect them from the dangers of excess sun exposure. The Irish light skin, hair, and eyes allows the most sun absorption from the few hours they are exposed to it throughout the year. The global melting pot makeup means we may live in the wrong place for our skin type. An African American living in the central to northern US is virtually guaranteed to be vitamin D deficient, while the very fair skinned living in the South must be extra careful to avoid burning nearly all year around.

Whatever your skin color or cultural heritage, it is important to know how to approach safe sun exposure. Even very dark skinned individuals can burn if they are not careful.

Second, know the types and strengths of rays to consider. UVA rays are more damaging, and are stronger in the very early and late hours of the day. This recent revelation means that previous advice on getting your sun early or late is outdated and incorrect. UVB rays are present during mid-day hours, and provide the most health benefits. ***This means you should ideally be getting about an hour a day total of full sun exposure between 10 am and 4 pm several times a week.*** Yes, you read correctly, this is completely opposite to everything we have been told for decades.

Latitude is a major factor. The further from the equator you are, the more time you will need to spend in the sun to reap the benefits. **Vacationing down south? Watch out!** The sun can be brutal to skin accustomed to weaker rays. Do not underestimate this factor. (I once got burned just sitting in the Costa Rican sunshine for 30 minutes at 8 in the morning!)

The time of year and elevation also affect the sun's impact on us. On or near water? Watch out for magnified exposure because of reflection.

### How can you expose yourself to sunshine in a safe fashion?

**BEWARE of Medication and sunshine interactions!** There are many medications that cause your skin to become extremely photosensitive. This means that even two to ten minutes of sunshine can cause sunburn or discoloration. Acne and skin lightening medications are notorious for causing photosensitivity. (There are many better options for achieving clear skin, especially during the summer months.)

**#1 Build sun tolerance gradually.** This is best done in the early spring when we naturally gravitate to spending more time outdoors. You may only be able to tolerate 5-10 minutes in the sun at a time before your skin begins to show pink. Increase exposure time a little each day. Early morning may be best for the very fair, but try to move your sun exposure to later in the day over the course of a few weeks. By the time the more intense summer sun is in the sky, you should be able to tolerate 15-60 minutes at a time without burning. A light to medium tan is the original built-in, all natural sunscreen. This strategy is safe for most people. The most fair may only be able to achieve 10 minute maximums.

**#2 Regular, consistent sun exposure is critical.** You cannot stay inside all day throughout the week, and build up your sun tolerance on two weekend days. Make it a point to get outside for a few minutes during the day, *every day*. Unless you are outside a lot during the day on a regular basis, you are probably best off aiming for a maximum of 10-20 minute increments of sun at a time, 2-3 times a day.

**#3 Long increments of intermittent exposure is harmful.** The person who works inside all week and then stays outside all weekend is setting the stage for skin damage and cancer. Persons who work outside all year around have the fewest sun-related cancer issues, because they gradually and consistently increase their sun exposure time. (Their chemical exposures and smoking habits often increase cancer risk, however.)

**#4 At least 40% of your body needs to receive sun exposure.** If you are all covered up with clothing or sunblock, your skin is unable to respond correctly or adequately to sunshine. Bare arms and legs at least. Some facial exposure is unavoidable (due to reflection) and necessary, but I do recommend using hats to protect more delicate skin on faces, ears, and scalp, and which also helps prevent sun damage to the eyes.

**#5 Don't wash off your vitamin D.** Another interesting new revelation is that the vitamin D we produce from sunlight is not created instantly. It takes our skin as long as 48 hours to manufacture vitamin D. Cholesterol and natural skin oils are required to make vitamin D. (Beware if you take statins!) If your skin is squeaky clean when you go outside, or if you shower as soon as you come in, you are probably not able to produce much vitamin D. I am not advocating sharing your sweaty aroma with the world, but by using soap just on your smellier areas, and only warm water on the rest of you, you can wash off dirt, perspiration, and body odor with minimal impact on the beneficial layer of natural skin oils. Your skin will really thank you for this, too.

**#6 Do Not Burn!** Pink skin is your skin telling you it's had enough. Move into the shade, put on more clothing, or go inside. If you burn, restrict additional exposure until your skin color is back to normal. (see page 11)

**#7 Use a safe sunscreen anytime you know you will be exceeding your personal limits of sun exposure.** Apply it liberally and re-apply as needed. (See page 10-11 of this issue for safe sunscreen info) Be sure to allow enough unscreened exposure time. (see #4 above)

**#8 Consume lots of high antioxidant foods like berries or green tea which actually help skin tolerate more sun.** These include: dark chocolate, cooked tomatoes, watermelon, sweet peppers, goji berries, papaya, pomegranate, and blueberries. 2-3 cups/day of green tea is highly protective and the longer you have been drinking tea, the stronger your protection—even against melanoma. Fruit smoothies are a popular hot weather drink or meal. Make yours with plenty of berries and green tea. I often just cut open a tea bag of green tea and sprinkle it into drinks and other foods. Its flavor is very mild but its impact is significant.

**#9 Use skin lotions/creams containing natural vitamin C and flavonoids such as those found in green tea and my personal favorite, sea buckthorn oil.** These offer protection from burning and protection from the invisible damage caused by excessive sun exposure.

## The Truth About : Sunscreens

My 2009 Kingsport Times-News article about sunscreens elicited quite a response from readers, including a couple of local sunscreen manufacturers who never responded to my questions about hormone disrupting ingredients found in their products. I don't mind being controversial when it increases the public's awareness of what I believe to be a serious lack of truth and full disclosure about products that millions of people use daily, in the belief they are taking good care of themselves.

**Why do I believe that you should not rely on sunscreens to prevent skin damage or cancer?**

**Unknown amounts of these chemicals can be absorbed through the skin, enter your bloodstream, accumulate in your body fat and tissues**, yet there are no studies showing what the consequences may be or how this may affect you or your offspring decades from now. The fact that sunscreen chemicals enter the bloodstream is not breaking news. Several studies began warning of this back in the 1970's and 1980's, and it was also noted that the longer the sunscreens remained on the skin, the greater the amount of skin penetration. Needless to say, those findings have been ignored. (Maibach, H. "NDELA-Percutaneous Penetration." FDA Contract 223-75-2340, May 19, 1978) (Bronaugh, R.L., et al. "The effect of cosmetic vehicles on the penetration of N-nitrosodiethanolamine through excised human skin, J Invest Dermatol; 1981; 76(2): 94-96.)

**Some of the most common sunscreen chemicals are known to create powerful skin damaging free radicals**, which are loose particles that react with other molecules to damage fats, proteins, and even DNA, and cause premature aging, skin damage, and more. **Some sunscreen ingredients interact with others in the same product to create cancer causing compounds.** Triethanolamine combines with nitrite preservatives to create known carcinogenic nitrosamines, for example. PABA, Padimate-O, and other PABA derivatives, when exposed to UV rays, break down into dangerous free radicals and cause damaged strands of DNA. (ethyl dihydroxy propyl PAB, padimate-O or octyl dimethyl PABA, etc.) *Many sunscreen chemicals are known to break down into free radical promoting substances when exposed to sun and/or water!*

**Most sunscreens now contain micronized minerals**, to eliminate the chalky white look. I stated in my newspaper article that micronized is another name for nano particle, but I stand corrected. Micronized particles are just a size above nano particles, which can, and do enter your bloodstream, and may even penetrate cell walls. Manufacturers claim that micronized particles cannot penetrate the skin. I want to believe this is true, but I am still not convinced that micronized particles are safe to use. (Show me some valid independent testing and confirmation, please!) Most of these particles are known to be hazardous if inhaled. Watch out for Z-cote® , a type of micronized zinc that is appearing in lots of 2010 products.

Allow me to reiterate— I do not desire to be anyone's guinea pig in this new techno world. **How our bodies will respond to micronized or nano particles is unknown.** I suspect we will find out in about 10-20 years. Only three active sunblock ingredients are used in Canadian, European, and Australian products as of 1997, titanium dioxide, zinc oxide, and avobenzone. I agree with many researchers who believe the last one, also known as parsol 1789, is not safe because of the free radicals it creates in the skin. Plus, it is only effective for about one hour, anyway. Other inert ingredients are used in Europe and other countries which are considered by most of us to be iffy at best, and as dangerous as many used in the US.

**Many researchers now believe that the use of sunscreens causes more cancer and cancer-related deaths than they prevent.** Study after study has shown that sunscreen use increases the risks of all skin cancers, and plays a big role in many other cancers, as well. Many scientists have begun looking at the sharp increases in certain reproductive organ cancers such as testicular cancer, since heavy sunscreen use began.

(Garland, Cedric F., et al. Could sunscreens increase melanoma risk? American Journal of Public Health, Vol. 82, No. 4, April 1992, pp. 614-15). Ainsleigh, H. Gordon. Beneficial effects of sun exposure on cancer mortality. Preventive Medicine, Vol. 22, February 1993, pp. 132-40).

**Perhaps one of the most disturbing effects of the sunscreen chemicals is what is called the gender-bending effect.** Too many sunscreen chemicals mimic estrogen, a feminizing hormone. Estrogenic chemicals promote many cancers and affect both male and female reproductive systems. The damage may be worse in males as these chemicals reduce sperm production, and penis and testicle development in males, even before they are born. 2001 testing at the Institute of Pharmacology and Toxicology, University of Zurich, Switzerland found that 5 of the 6 most common sunscreen chemicals have strong estrogenic effects. These are most dangerous for the unborn child of a sunscreen-using mother.

## Sunscreens & Sunburns

***I believe that one of the biggest dangers about sunscreen use is that in preventing sunburns, people think they are protected from skin cancer.*** Countless studies have revealed this is simply not true.

*Marianne Berwick, PhD, MPH, an epidemiologist at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in New York presented a review of ten studies on sunscreen use and melanoma.*

***Her conclusion: Do not rely on sunscreens to prevent this deadly skin cancer. [melanoma]***

Excessive exposure is damaging, even when sunburn does not occur. We are just acquiring a false sense of security by preventing burns.

Study results have been mixed, probably because of the long time lag between sunscreen use & exposure, and skin cancer development, which can be 10-20 years. About half of the studies show that sunscreen use is associated with increased incidence of all skin cancers, not less. A very few show protective effects, and the rest are inconclusive.

Check out the Environmental Working Group cosmetic data base. <http://www.cosmeticsdatabase.com/> for safety and effectiveness ratings for specific products.

### **Are there any safe sunscreens?**

I do not recommend a product unless I would use it myself, and there are very few sunscreens out there that meet this criteria. As of today, February 2010, the following two products are the only ones I would use. If any of you have found a product you think is truly natural and effective that I should add to my recommended list, please let me know about it.

*Burt's Bees Baby Bee Diaper Ointment (virtually identical formula to my Burt's Bees favorite but discontinued product, Herbal Defense Cream)* contains an effective blend of zinc oxide and non-chemical ingredients.

*Dr. Mercola's Natural Sunscreen* (mail order only), is great for when you need protection without the heavy chalky white look of zinc.

I spend many hours each week out in the sun all summer long, and am blessed with skin that does not burn easily. However, I still use common sense, as my skin is becoming thinner and more fragile with age.

I always follow my own advice regarding high antioxidant creams, gradual acclimation to increasing sunlight strength and exposure, and so forth, and I always wear a hat with a wide brim to protect my ears and neck. I keep a couple of long sleeved but lightweight shirts handy for putting on if I see my skin has had enough, but I'm not ready to go in yet.

### **Get Burned? Minimize pain and damage with the following tips:**

**Keep affected area out of the sun** until completely healed, then start gradual exposure over again.

**Drink plenty of purified water** to help hydrate your literally bursting skin cells and dehydrated body.

**White willow bark** taken orally will decrease skin inflammation and pain, since it is a natural aspirin-like herb (it is the source of aspirin's active ingredient)

**Tea for topical use:** brew 5 green & 5 black teabags in 2 cups of water. Add ice to make 1 quart, and use a clean washcloth (it will stain!) to apply it to the burn. Repeat as often as you can to soothe skin and help inhibit damage. You can add a double batch of tea to a cool bathtub to soak in if the burn area is large.

Apply pure **aloe vera gel** when not using the tea. This cools, soothes, and speeds healing.

**Boost antioxidant intake** and consider taking extra vitamins C, E, and zinc for a few days to speed healing.

Apply **Sea Buckthorn oil** to mitigate sun damage when skin cools. This high in vitamin A (great skin vitamin) and vitamin C berry oil can be applied topically and oral supplemental versions are now available. Many new products are coming out that contain this oil that I have been using for years. As with all new "fad" products, be careful that what you are buying is pure and of good quality. (I order mine from a reliable source).

Apply moisturizers containing **coconut oil and/or lavender oil**. Make your own easily by purchasing a jar of extra virgin, unprocessed coconut oil and a high quality lavender essential oil. Put about 1/2 cup of the oil into a smaller jar and stir in 8-10 drops of the lavender essential oil. I would also add a little sea buckthorn oil.

Apply to burned or dry skin as needed to moisturize. Even the coconut oil by itself is fantastic for the skin all year around.

## The Last Word

What a year this has been already.

Haiti, Chile, and Argentina have just been hit by major earthquakes. Of all the natural disasters, I am especially wary of earthquakes—partly because I have experienced their terrifying power first hand, and mostly because they deliver their 30-90 second surprise punch without warning.

The devastation to totally deforested and impoverished Haiti is tremendous compared to the minor impact of the quake in lush and prosperous Dominican Republic on the same island. How do you deal with what was an environmental disaster even before the hurricanes of 2008 and the recent quakes? Destruction of natural resources leads to a domino effect of life threatening consequences that every citizen should be aware of. (see picture at lower right)

Chile's building codes and preparedness paid off in the low numbers of casualties after the strongest earthquake ever recorded. The Pacific islands have narrowly escaped tsunami disasters.

Our Northeast is still buried under feet of record snowfalls. One of my daughters lives in the D.C. area and has been astounded not only by 42 inch deep snow, but by how it shut down our capital.

Constant snowfall here in East TN was common when I was young, but it has been years since we saw anything like this year's accumulations. I saw Patrick Henry lake frozen all the way across more than once back in the 60's, but we haven't seen those sustained low temperatures in a very long time. Just three summers ago brought us some of the highest temperatures and worst droughts we had ever experienced. Let's hope that March comes in *and* goes out like a lamb, but who knows?

I believe "global warming" is part of our planet's natural life cycle, but I have no doubt that human activity has managed to impact it in significant ways. Shorelines all over the world are being reclaimed by the sea, and storm severity as well as geological upheavals have increased dramatically in most areas in the last decade. Since we cannot control mother nature, it is vital that we find ways to survive within her unpredictable structure.

Truly, we are blessed to live in an area of relative safety as far as natural disasters go, but nature is likely to continue to test our ability to adapt.

Losing electricity last December allowed me to confirm that our well insulated home stays reasonably warm with very little help from the gas fireplace. Our metal roof shrugs off hail and ice, and its light color reflects the summer sun effectively, reducing our heat gain in the hottest months. Too many homes depend on power to regulate temperature so that without electricity, occupants must move to shelters. In the face of wildly fluctuating weather patterns, do you see how impractical this is?

Please consider the true meaning of Earth Day. Governments, buildings, and everything manmade will come and go, but without a healthy planet, the future of all living things becomes uncertain. If not for yourself, do your part for your children and theirs.

Have a beautiful Spring!

Marie



This photo shows the border between Haiti and the Dominican Republic. See the shocking difference? Thousands of Haitian lives have been lost in landslides triggered by recent hurricanes and earthquakes. Forests and greenery have prevented erosion and landslides in the DR, but the photo above shows the increasing problem of illegal tree cutting on the DR side. (Wood is the only cooking fuel for most Haitians) The runoff from rainfall is then channeled swiftly to the sea, meaning that Haiti also has a serious shortage of fresh water, and increasingly poor soil quality.

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