

LEADING NUTRITIONIST RATES AUSSIE BEAUTIES



JENNIFER HAWKINS

"(Miss Universe 2004) embodies health and beauty in a very natural Australian way."



SARAH MURDOCH

"I saw her recently in Sydney and thought she really has the most incredibly beautiful skin I've ever seen."



MEGAN GALE

"She radiates health and beauty and has a gorgeous sun-kissed look. She is also blessed with fantastic genes."



ELLE MACPHERSON

"She has an all-Australian natural, healthy look."

The greatest threat is the sun, but fruit and vegetables can help save our skin, as **FAY BURSTIN** writes

MOST Australian women speak fluent sunsmart, even if they don't always practise it.

Well-schooled in the language of slip-slop-slap-slide (shirt, sunscreen, hat, sunglasses), we're slowly learning our lesson for earning the terrible title of the world's highest incidence of skin cancer.

But perhaps it's time public health experts considered introducing another word into our skin-care vocabulary.

Slurp maybe? Swallow? A growing body of evidence suggests diet may also play a role in how we protect ourselves from the sun's damaging UV rays.

Our 382,000 annual skin cancer cases are largely blamed on sun exposure and the widening gap in the ozone layer.

But nutritionist Erica Angyal says dietary changes over the past 50 years, especially in the type of fats we eat, may be making our skin more susceptible to harmful UV rays.

"The big problem these days is that our diets are overloaded with Omega-6 fatty acids, found in virtually all processed and fast food, and deficient in the Omega-3s found in fish, green leafy vegetables and nuts," says Ms Angyal, author of *Gorgeous Skin in 30 days, the natural anti-aging plan for radiant, youthful skin* (Lodlan Book, \$29.95).

"This imbalance in fatty acids may be making our skin more vulnerable to damage from sunlight."

Researchers from the University of Minnesota found development of skin cancer was partly associated with poor dietary practices. They found Omega-3s reduced

Skin-deep health plan

skin-cell damage when exposed to UV light while excessive amounts of Omega-6 fats, such as margarine and corn oil, increased the risk of tumour growth.

And a study by University of Queensland doctors found a 40 per cent lower melanoma risk among people who ate fish regularly, suggesting marine oils and Omega-3 fatty acids had an effect.

Ms Angyal, from Sydney but living in Tokyo and working as the official nutrition consultant for Miss Universe Japan's 30 contestants, says research showed intake of fresh fruit, vegetables and tea played a big part preventing skin cancer as well as maintaining a gorgeous complexion.

University of Arizona Cancer Centre researchers found black tea drinkers had a 40 per cent lower risk of developing squamous-cell carcinoma than those who didn't drink tea.

And other research suggests compounds in green tea may act as anti-inflammatories and antioxidants to protect skin cells against cancerous changes.

But it's fresh fruit and vegetables — the No 1 secret to the radiant skin of Megan Gale, Cate Blanchett, Jennifer Hawkins and Elle Macpherson — that Ms Angyal says hold the answer to lifelong health, including fending off sun damage.

The key ingredients are the phytonutrients, powerful antioxi-

dant and anti-inflammatory compounds found only in plants that give them their colour, flavour and natural disease resistance.

"Phytonutrients help repair skin and prevent further damage by neutralising free radicals," Ms Angyal says.

"Some phytonutrient antioxidants such as beta-carotene in carrots can accumulate in the skin and help protect against UV radiation by boosting the skin's natural defences.

"And studies have shown antioxidants such as Vitamin C in brightly coloured tomatoes, pawpaw, capsicum, strawberries and citrus fruit, and Vitamin E in spinach, pumpkin and broccoli inhibit UV-induced skin damage."

ASSOCIATE Professor John Kelly, dermatologist and head of the Victorian Melanoma Service at the Alfred Hospital, says a link between skin cancer and unsaturated fats was suggested many years ago but the evidence to date was weak.

"These preliminary findings are interesting but need to be explored further before any public health recommendations could be made," he says.

Cancer Council Australia spokesman Craig Sinclair said a healthy diet was already known to reduce the risk of bowel and breast cancer but any links to skin cancer were yet to be tested.

"UV radiation causes 95 per cent of skin cancers so any benefit from a healthy diet will be marginal compared to proven sun protection methods such as shade, SPF30+ sunscreen, protective clothing, hats and sunglasses," he says.

While all experts agree diet is no substitute for sun protection, great nutrition and a balanced lifestyle are critical for healthy, glowing skin, which replenishes cells every 30 days.

"Our skin is a window to our internal health and tells us how fast we are ageing," says Ms Angyal, who insists gorgeous skin is within everyone's grasp — but with some effort.

MUNCH on at least five serves of fresh fruit and vegetables a day. Packed with vitamins, minerals and phytonutrients that help fight free radicals, they speed up cell turnover, strengthen capillaries and help hold water in the skin.

FEAST on fish at least three times a week, especially cold-water deep-sea fish such as salmon, mackerel, tuna and sardines. Omega-3 fats in fish help protect skin from sun damage.

HAVE at least two tablespoons of good fats a day and minimise the bad ones — the Omega-6s in margarine and oils made from corn, sunflower, safflower, sesame, soy and canola. Good fats such as olive, flaxseed, walnut, coconut and mac-



Erica Angyal

adamia oils, fish, avocados and raw nuts help moisturise the skin from the inside out, improving blood flow and nutrient delivery to cells and helping absorb vitamins and phytonutrients. They might even reduce the impact of wrinkles.

AVOID the sun between 10am and 3pm when UV rays are most intense. Wear a wide-brimmed hat, protective clothes and sunscreen, preferably a physical sunblock containing titanium dioxide and/or zinc oxide. Never let your skin burn.

INCLUDE a small amount of good-quality protein in each meal, such as fish, eggs, poultry and unprocessed soy to help repair free radicals damage, create enzymes to zap toxins and balance blood sugar levels.

DRINK at least eight glasses of water a day (more if you work out) to hydrate skin cells to make it look smoother and younger. Water is essential to maintain the skin's elasticity, reduce dryness and dilute and expel toxins.

GET eight hours' quality sleep a night, when the body produces greater amounts of growth hormone and anti-ageing hormone melatonin.

WORK up a sweat at least 40 minutes a day, five times a week, to help skin flush out toxins that make it look dull and blotchy. Exercise increases circulation, bringing fresh nutrients and oxygen to skin cells and boosting anti-ageing hormones such as human growth hormone.