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3 Ways To Get Better Skin— When The Sun Damage Is Already Done

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If you've never gone a day without sunscreen, bravo. We bet you look fantastic. For the other 99.9% of us, we can shake off a little of the guilt: A growing body of research suggests that some of this damage may be partially reversible. Most recently, a study in the *International Journal of Cosmetic Science* suggested that a compound found in *Rhodiola rosea* (a botanical used in many anti-aging and hydrating skin and hair care products) has the potential to reverse [premature aging](#) (<http://www.prevention.com/beauty/beauty/best-anti-aging-product-retinoids-vitamin>) in human skin cells brought on by UV exposure. Though additional studies are needed to tell if the results of this petri-dish lab test will actually translate to real-life

results (e.g. [wrinkle reduction](http://www.prevention.com/beauty/beauty/best-beauty-products-makeup-wrinkle-creams-and-more) (<http://www.prevention.com/beauty/beauty/best-beauty-products-makeup-wrinkle-creams-and-more>)), there are effective ways to erase some of your sun damage right now. According to top skin docs, these are your best bets:

To scale back skin cancer risk, try photodynamic therapy

This in-office treatment combines blue light and a topical amino acid called Levulan to get rid of actinic keratoses, rough, textured patches of pre-cancerous cells often found on sun-exposed spots like your forehead, nose, and the tops of your ears. These patches affect about 58 million Americans, and removal prevents them from developing into full-blown skin cancer, says Rebecca Kazin, MD, a board-certified dermatologist at the Washington Institute of Dermatologic Laser Surgery at Johns Hopkins Dermatology. And it's likely you won't have to foot the bill (usually around \$500) yourself: The treatment is typically covered under insurance as a preventative measure.

This tried-and-true topical

<http://www.prevention.com/beauty/defy-your-age/inexpensive-anti-aging-creams-and-lotions>) can help remedy the fine lines and slack skin that appear after UV light has broken down the fibers keeping your skin taut, says Julius Few, MD, director of the Few Institute in Chicago and New York and a clinical professor of plastic surgery at the University of Chicago. The vitamin A derivative stimulates collagen production, which can repair some sun-induced sagging and wrinkling, he explains. Cool fact: a recent study in the *Journal of Cosmetic Dermatology* found that over-the-counter retinol, found in products like StriVectin's Advanced Retinol Day Treatment with Broad Spectrum SPF 30 (\$99, [strivectin.com](http://www.strivectin.com) (<http://www.strivectin.com/ar-day.html>)), is just as effective as its prescription-strength counterpart, the retinoid tretinoin.

Tone down dark spots with kojic acid

When SPF-less skin is exposed to the sun, your skin cells ramp up production of melanin in an attempt to shielding themselves from damage, creating sun spots that are tough, but not

impossible, to treat. In lieu of tricky topical lighteners like hydroquinone (overuse can backfire and trigger unsightly splotches of its own), Few recommends kojic acid, a natural fruit acid that can help even skin tone. "Even weak forms of kojic acid can be effective," he says. Find it in a brightening serum like La Roche-Posay's Mela-D Pigment Control (\$53, [laroche-posay.us \(http://www.laroche-posay.us/mela-d-pigment-control-3337872413162.html\)](http://www.laroche-posay.us/mela-d-pigment-control-3337872413162.html)), which contains a 2% concentration of the botanical acid.
