

# Maintaining a Healthy Lifestyle: How It Helps Your Skin

## Handout 4

Good skin care involves more than just using the right soap and moisturizer. Your lifestyle also plays an important role in your skin's health and appearance. Follow these lifestyle tips for healthier skin:

- **Eat a healthy diet.** Your body needs adequate amounts of protein, vitamins and minerals in order to keep your skin healthy. Eat a diet rich in fruits, vegetables and whole grains. And drink plenty of water to help keep your skin hydrated.
- **Exercise.** Exercising improves blood circulation, which in turn may improve your skin's tone and color.
- **Sleep well.** If you're not getting enough sleep, or the quality of your sleep is poor, your face will show it. A lack of sleep may turn your complexion puffy, lackluster and sallow.
- **Quit smoking.** In addition to putting you at risk of heart disease and cancer, smoking may cause your face to age prematurely.
- **Protect yourself from the sun.** Dark skin can tolerate the sun better than fair skin can, in that it absorbs less harmful rays. However, any complexion can become blotchy, leathery and wrinkled from continued sun overexposure. Overexposure also increases the risk of skin cancer. Use sunscreen generously, wear protective clothing and try to avoid sun exposure between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.
- **Avoid using soaps labeled "antibacterial" or "antimicrobial."** These tend to reduce the skin's acidity, which acts as a protection from infection.
- **Skin folds or creases (as in the groin area and underarms) need washing more frequently – twice a day, morning and bedtime.** Rashes can easily form in these areas because of increased moisture and warmth. Increasing the air circulation to these areas to help prevent rashes can be accomplished by positioning the arms and legs so the skin surfaces are separated.
- **Avoid using talc powders, as they may support yeast growth.** They can also "cake up" and keep moisture in, causing skin breakdown.
- **Calluses may form on your feet and hands.** These can be removed by soaking frequently in warm water and toweling briskly to remove dead skin. You can use moisturizing creams to help soften calluses.
- **Finger and toe nails require special care.** Soak them and rub gently with a towel to remove dead skin and decrease the chance of hangnails forming. Nails are easier to cut after soaking; be sure to cut them straight across to avoid ingrown nails, and keep them short for safety.