



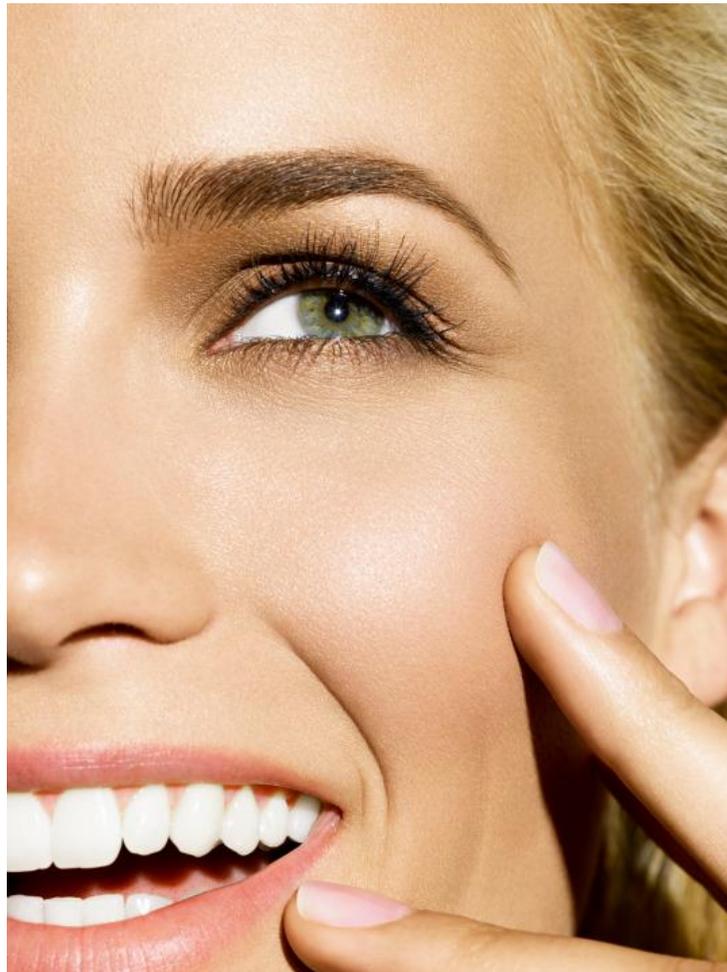
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BEAUTY

## 7 Ways to Reverse Sun Damage

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*Expert advice on the seven ways to regenerate your skin from sun damage. (Photo: Ondrea Barbe)*

Can you really reverse sun damage? Experts say that while you can't entirely undo the cellular changes caused by UV radiation, you can heal skin to reduce the appearance of wrinkles, sunspots, sagging skin, and Melasma. You can even eliminate pre-cancerous cells before they have a chance to turn into Melanoma.

Unfortunately sun damage isn't something that just happens to sun worshipers, even a few minutes of exposed unprotected skin can cause problems. Another big culprit is childhood burns which can wreak havoc years after the initial burn. Skin issues from sun exposure can start earlier than you think. "I even see sun damage in patients as early as their twenties," says Michigan-based plastic surgeon [Dr. Anthony Youn](#).

Thankfully there are some solutions ranging from drugstore finds to dermatologist's treatments. However, the results only last if you are strict about SPF and staying out of the sun going forward. That's the case with sun spots which can be eliminated with the help of an Intense Pulsed Laser, but can re-emerge should skin be exposed again. "There is no way to 100% eliminate them because whenever you get sun they can come back," says Dr. Youn.

If you are ready to get serious about your skin, we spoke to three top doctors who offered seven ways to regenerate and repair sun damage.

**Hydroquinone:** "Bar-none, [Hydroquinone](#) combined with tretinoin (Retin-A) is the most effective, aggressive skin care regimen for reversing sun damage," says Dr. Youn. "It's a good option if you don't want to do anything invasive." Youn says the topical prescription cream will reduce sun spots and uneven pigmentation. It works by intensely exfoliating the upper layers of your skin, so be prepared for a lot of flaking for the first six weeks before the skin adjusts. Results can be seen as soon as a month, and you can use it for up to 6 months."

**Intense Pulsed Light:** "IPL's are the gold standard for pigment reduction," explains Dr. Youn. The procedure causes age and sun spots to turn dark and flake off over the course of a couple of days. A few treatments are usually needed to remove the discoloration.

**Photodynamic Therapy:** Photodynamic therapy (PDT) is a treatment that pairs a photo-synthesizing medication with light therapy to treat both sun damage and pre cancerous cells. "By using this medication you can actually going treat the pre cancerous and atypical sun damaged cells to prevent skin cancer," says dermatologist [Dr. Michael Lin](#). The procedure takes about an hour and is often combined with Intense Pulsed Light treatments to speed up results.

**Chemical Peels:** "If you want a rapid change in your skin a chemical peel can be a nice way to do it," says Dr. Youn. Peels remove the top layer of skin reducing wrinkles, tackling uneven pigmentation and brown spots, and also evening out texture. "The mildest option, glycolic acid, an alpha-hydroxy acid, is suitable for the treatment of fine wrinkles, uneven pigmentation and acne. For a deeper chemical peel, trichloroacetic acid (TCA) peels are used for uneven pigmentation and to improve the texture and tone of the skin. TCA peels achieve greater and more dramatic results than a mild peel," says Dr. Lin. Expect a few days of peeling skin after the procedure, with new skin emerging after about five days.

**Dark Spot Correcting Cream:** To prevent dark spots or treat mild ones, reach for this drugstore find. "[L'Oreal Youth Code Dark Spot Corrector](#) contains niacinamide, a easily-tolerated but mild skin lightener.

It's a good option for the budget conscious or if you are in between regimens of Hydroquinone," says Dr. Youn.

**Topical antioxidants:** To repair skin from the inside, dermatologist [Dr. Ava Shamban](#) recommends applying antioxidants directly onto your face and neck. She is a fan of Vitamin C serums like [Skinceuticals C + AHA](#) that slough off dead skin cells and boost collagen. Another option is to do a DIY antioxidant mask. Dr. Shamban's favorite is one that combines yogurt, which has natural AHAs, with a spoonful of antibacterial and anti-inflammatory honey, and frozen strawberries and blueberries which are full of antioxidants. Place the ingredients in a blender and apply to face for 15 minutes. "The antioxidants will penetrate and repair the skin," Dr. Shamban says.

**Tretinoin (Retin A):** "Tretinoin is tried and true and has the best clinical evidence that it really works," says Dr. Lin. "It causes skin cells to cycle faster stimulating collagen and exfoliation to repair skin." The product has to be applied at night to be the most effective. Skin will be ultra sensitive to sunlight, so it needs to be avoided after application.

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