

We see right
through you,
doughnuts.



7 SNEAKY CANCER CULPRITS

Health threats can come in many disguises. We pull the masks off seven that are hiding in plain sight.

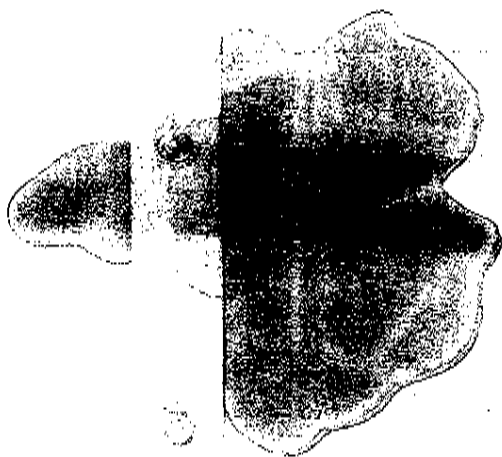
IN THE CATALOG OF CARCINOGENS, THE SUN IS ANYTHING BUT SUBTLE. IT'S BIG, IT'S bright, and come June, it's practically begging you to embrace those DNA-mutating rays. If it weren't for a healthy slathering of sunscreen, we'd all be toast—complete with the browned, cancerous crust.

Then there are the covert killers, the ones that sneak into your summer. That backyard barbecue you host every year? You may want to rethink serving those hot dogs, which could be harboring cancer-causing chemicals called nitrosamines. While you're at it, chuck the Styrofoam cups and plates (styrene) and skip the side of french fries (acrylamide). And whatever you do, try not to squeeze ketchup or squirt mustard all over your nice clean shirt—some laundry detergents can be tougher on your cells than they are on stains.

It's almost enough to make a guy wish for winter... but that wouldn't matter. These health threats don't care what time of year it is, because every day is open season to them. So be the hunter, not the hunted: With our guidance, you can eliminate some of the dangers lurking in the shadows and enjoy the days—and dodge the death rays—of summer.

Excuse me, sir, you have a spot of cancer on your shirt.

THREAT LEVEL



French Fries, Chips, Bread

acrylamide

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Acrylamide, a form of a chemical used to treat wastewater, lurks in french fries, chips, bread, and even doughnuts. "When some carb-rich foods are cooked at high temperatures, the amino acid asparagine reacts with sugars in the foods, forming acrylamide," says Timothy Fennell, Ph.D., toxicology director at RTI International. Your body's chemical reactions to acrylamide can lead to DNA mutations that may raise your cancer risk. **SHIELD YOUR CELLS** Strategize in the kitchen. "Opt for lower temperatures and shorter cooking times," says Fennell. "If you do fry, don't make foods very brown." And give your spuds a bath: Soaking potatoes for 2 hours before cooking cuts acrylamide buildup by up to half, say U.K. scientists.

Brown Rice

arsenic

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Arsenic was once in the arsenal of every self-respecting medieval assassin. Today, it's probably in your pantry. A *Consumer Reports* study found that some brands of brown rice contain more of this toxic metal than white does. Arsenic may disable your body's DNA repair system, so when cells are damaged, the DNA can't bounce back, making it vulnerable to cancer-causing mutations, says Michael Hansen, Ph.D., a Consumers Union senior scientist. **SHIELD YOUR CELLS** Rinse rice before cooking (the water should run clear). And buy a bigger pot: Use at least a 6-to-1 ratio of water to rice instead of the typical 2 to 1. (Strain excess water.) When you eat out, limit yourself to two weekly servings of rice or rice-based foods.

Laundry Detergent

1,4-dioxane

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Your detergent removes stains—and may leave behind a toxic chemical. In 2011, an environmental group discovered 1,4-dioxane lurking in laundry detergent. The chemical isn't a proven cancer causer in humans, but it has triggered liver and nasal tumors in rats. Worse, you won't find 1,4-dioxane on labels because it's an impurity, not an ingredient, says Sonya Lunder, M.P.H., of the Environmental Working Group. **SHIELD YOUR CELLS** Go with a greener cleaner, like Clorox Green Works laundry detergent. Or learn to read between the label lines: Polyethylene, polyethylene glycol, PEG, polyoxyethylene, or words containing "oxynol" or "eth" are signs dioxane may be inside.

Wrinkle-Free Dress Shirts

formaldehyde

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Formaldehyde keeps corpses looking their best; it also keeps wrinkle-free shirts spiffy. And while dead men have no cause for concern, the living might. "There's evidence that formaldehyde causes nasal and respiratory cancers in humans," says Lunder. "Any form raises your risk, and multiple sources add up. There's no safe level of exposure." **SHIELD YOUR CELLS** Minimize fabric-to-skin contact by reverting to shirts that require an iron and elbow grease. But if you're hooked on wrinkle-free fabrics, at least throw shirts in the wash before you wear them for the first time. One cycle can cut formaldehyde emissions by 60 percent, according to the California Environmental Protection Agency.

Styrofoam Cups, Containers

styrene

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Mayor Michael Bloomberg wants to ban Styrofoam from the Big Apple because of what it isn't: biodegradable. Ban it from your body because of what it's made from: styrene, which may generate a chemical that can damage your DNA. It's "reasonably anticipated" to be a human carcinogen, a National Toxicology Program report notes. **SHIELD YOUR CELLS** Stay away from styrene in all forms, including coffee cups and their lids. "Avoid heating food in Styrofoam or polystyrene containers, especially fatty foods, which can leach styrene," says David Andrews, Ph.D., of the Environmental Working Group. How can you tell if a plastic container contains polystyrene? Look for a "6" on the bottom.

Electronic Cigarettes

nitrosamines

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It's amazing how similar e-cigs are to the real thing—some can even boost cancer risk. The FDA found nitrosamines, a carcinogen in tobacco products, in some electronic cigarette brands. Even if you're not a smoker, you still may be taking them in: They can form when stomach acid reacts with nitrates and nitrites in hot dogs, bacon, or other cured meats. **SHIELD YOUR CELLS** If you smoke any type of cigarette, it's time to quit cold turkey. In a University of Wisconsin study, smokers who cut back before a set quit day were more likely to relapse than those who simply quit. Also trim your intake of cured meats, or change the way you cook them. Boiling or microwaving is better than frying.



BOOZE AND LOSE

Alcohol can lower your skin cancer defenses.

Stock your beach cooler with tea, not tipples. In a German study, people who drank alcohol became sunburned 35 minutes faster than when they didn't drink—and not because they passed out by the pool. Alcohol can impair your skin's antioxidant defense system, raising the cancer risk. So pour an iced tea instead: In a Harvard study, men who regularly downed caffeinated drinks had a lower risk of basal-cell skin cancer, the most common cancer in the U.S.