

## Skin: Your Largest Organ

When you think of the organs of your body, your heart, stomach and lungs probably come to mind. But did you know that your skin is also an organ? In fact, it is your body's largest organ. Healthy skin is very important. It protects all of the other organs in your body as well as your skeleton and muscles. Taking proper care of your skin can go a long way in helping to take care of your health.

The skin has two main layers. The outer layer, called the **epidermis** (eh.puh.DER.muhs), is tough and waterproof. It keeps germs out of your body as long as it isn't broken. When you get a cut or scrape, you have to keep it clean so it can heal properly. The top layer of the epidermis is made of dead skin cells. These cells can easily be scraped off. They prevent germs from getting any further into the skin. Underneath the layer of dead skin cells is a layer that grows and divides quickly to make new cells. These cells are pushed toward the surface to replace the ones that flake off.

The bottom layer of your skin is called the **dermis**. There are blood vessels and nerve endings inside this layer as well as glands that keep your skin from drying out. The dermis also contains **sweat glands** and **pores**. Sweat is produced in sweat glands and it leaves the surface of your skin through pores. This occurs so that your body can stay at the right temperature. If you become too hot, you sweat. As the sweat evaporates, your body is cooled. Another important job for your skin is to remove salts and other wastes. They are removed from your body through your pores when you sweat. Your hair and nails are also part of your skin. They are made of dead skin cells that form deep inside your skin. The reason your hair and nails grow is that new cells push against them from below.

Because your skin is so important, taking care of your skin is important as well. The best thing you can do to keep your skin healthy is to keep it clean. It is especially important to wash your hands often. This keeps germs from things you have touched from getting into your body. Bathing your whole body is also important. You should also use sunscreen to protect your skin from the sun. Sunscreens have SPF numbers between 2 and 50. SPF stands for Sun Protection Factor. The higher the number, the more protection you will get from using that sunscreen. It is especially important to use sunscreen if you are in the sun when its rays are strongest – generally between 10 am and 3 pm.

## Skin: Your Largest Organ Questions

1. Your skin
  - a. protects the organs in your body.
  - b. protects your skeleton.
  - c. is an organ.
  - d. All of the above
  
2. The epidermis
  - a. is the top layer of skin.
  - b. is the bottom layer of skin.
  - c. is made up entirely of dead skin cells.
  - d. contains blood vessels.
  
3. It is important to keep a cut clean
  - a. so it won't hurt
  - b. because germs can get into your body through breaks in your skin
  - c. so you won't get a scar
  - d. All of the above
  
4. Which of the following is not made of dead skin cells?
  - a. bones
  - b. hair
  - c. nails
  - d. the surface of your skin
  
5. What is directly under the layer of dead skin?
  - a. the dermis
  - b. cells that grow and divide quickly
  - c. both of these
  - d. neither of these
  
6. Which is not contained in the dermis?
  - a. blood vessels
  - b. pores
  - c. sweat glands
  - d. joints

Name \_\_\_\_\_



Date \_\_\_\_\_

### Skin: Your Largest Organ Questions (Cont'd)

7. What is the purpose of sweat?
  - a. It brings nutrients into your body.
  - b. It tells you when you are sick.
  - c. It keeps your body cool.
  - d. All of the above
  
8. Why is it important to wash your hands often?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
9. SPF stands for \_\_\_\_\_.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
10. If you want to protect your skin from the strong rays of the sun, you should
  - a. use sunscreen with a high SPF number.
  - b. use sunscreen only between 10 am and 3 pm.
  - c. wash your hands often.
  - d. All of the above

Name \_\_\_\_\_



Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Skin: Your Largest Organ Answers

1. c
2. a
3. b
4. a
5. b
6. d
7. c
8. It keeps germs from things you have touched from getting into your body.
9. Sun Protection Factor
10. a