

SKIN PROTECTION

TIPS FOR SMART SUN SAFETY

While we welcome warmer temperatures and sunshine, the sun and heat affect everyone. It's important to take precautions to protect your skin and eyes from the harmful rays. According to the National Cancer Institute, skin cancer is the most common form of cancer in the United States, and over 90 percent of skin cancers are caused by the sun. The first step to staying safe is to be aware of the risks and establish habits to protect yourself.

PROTECT YOURSELF FROM SUN EXPOSURE

The best way to prevent sunburn is to avoid sun exposure when possible. Try to stay out of the sun when it is strongest – from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m. If you must be outside during this time, you can protect yourself by wearing protective clothing such as: hats, wraparound sunglasses with UV protection, and loose-fitting, tightly woven clothing that covers your arms and legs.



DON'T LEAVE HOME WITHOUT SUNSCREEN

When you must be outside in the sun, use sunscreen to help protect your skin. Consider these valuable tips:



- Use a sunscreen that has a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 15 or higher. Sunscreens that are labeled "broad-spectrum" can protect the skin from ultraviolet A and B (UVA and UVB) rays. Sunscreens come in lotions, gels, creams, ointments and sprays.
- Apply sunscreen at least 30 minutes before going in the sun. Apply evenly to all skin that will be exposed, including the nose, ears, neck, scalp and feet. Use lip balm or cream that has SPF 15+ to protect your lips from getting sunburned or developing cold sores.
- Sunscreen should be applied every 90 minutes to two hours while in the sun and after swimming or sweating a lot (even if it's labeled as "water-resistant" or "sweatproof"). Wet skin actually burns more easily. The SPF value decreases if a person sweats heavily or is in water. Sunscreen effectiveness can also be affected by wind, humidity and altitude.
- If you're going to have high exposure to the sun, consider using a physical sunscreen (sunblock) such as zinc oxide, which will stop all sunlight from reaching the skin.
- Do not use old sunblock – buy it fresh every year for best results.
- If you need to use sunscreen and insect repellent with DEET, do not use a product that combines the two. You can apply sunscreen first and then apply the insect repellent.
- If you have had a skin or allergic reaction to a sunscreen, choose one that is free of para-aminobenzoic acid (PABA), preservatives and fragrances.
- If wearing very light clothing, use sunscreen under your clothing.

CHECK YOUR MEDICINE CABINET

Certain prescriptions and over-the-counter medications can make your skin more sensitive to the sun and susceptible to sunburn. These include some antibiotics (tetracyclines, quinolones and sulfa drugs), diuretics (water pills), glyburide (for diabetes), amiodarone (for heart conditions) and NSAID pain relievers like celecoxib and ibuprofen. Skin care products containing alpha hydroxyl acid and retin-A also contain warnings about sun sensitivity. Always read the label directions and warnings carefully for all medications or ask your doctor or pharmacist if any of your prescriptions or over-the-counter medicines are putting you at risk.

COMMIT TO HATS

Protection for the face and other parts of the head can be as simple as wearing a hat. Your favorite baseball cap, however, may not provide the best coverage for your face, temple, ears and neck. Wide, 4-inch brimmed hats, pith helmets, hats with double brims or removable flaps, or an Australian-style hat with a full brim offer the best protection.



DON'T FORGET YOUR EYES

Always wear wraparound sunglasses to protect your eyes when outdoors. Prolonged exposure to the sun's ultraviolet rays can be damaging to the eyes. A good shade hat combined with the use of sunglasses is the best way to protect eyes from the sun.

A label on the lens indicates its UV rating or percentage of ultraviolet rays blocked by the sunglasses (the best rating is 100). Don't buy them if no information is provided by the manufacturer as they may not offer enough protection.

CHECK YOUR SKIN ONCE EVERY MONTH

- Pick a day once a month, mark your calendar and examine your whole body – head to toe.
- The best way to do a skin self-exam is in a well-lit room in front of a mirror right after a bath or shower.
- Learn where your birthmark, spots and moles are and what they usually look like.
- Check growths on your skin for changes in size (larger than a pencil eraser), shape (irregular), color (many colors – brown, black, red) or feel.
- Look for sores that don't heal or a mole that bleeds.
- Look for new growths.

- Call a Blues On CallSM Health Coach at **1.888.BLUE.428** for additional assistance.
- Log in to your member website and click on the **Health and Wellness** tab. Use the Symptom Checker, Medical Encyclopedia or one of the other useful resources to learn more.

SUNBURN REMEDIES

- Use cool cloths on sunburned areas and take frequent cool showers or baths.
- Apply soothing lotions that contain aloe vera. Topical steroids (such as 1% hydrocortisone cream) may also help with sunburn pain and swelling.
- Sunburn can cause a mild fever and headache. Lie down in a cool, quiet room. Drinking fluids may help alleviate the headache, which could be caused by dehydration.
- There is little you can do to prevent the skin from peeling as it is part of the healing process. Lotion may help relieve the itching.
- If you experience blisters from your sunburn, do NOT break them. Also do not cover them.