

Facts about the Sun and your Skin

The sun is the most common cause of skin cancer. Skin cancer is the most common cancer in the US with a million new cases a year. Malignant melanoma, a deadly form of skin cancer is the second most common cancer in women aged 25-34. Early blistering sunburns at 15-20 years of age have an increased risk of becoming cancer than burns in older people.

A baby's skin is thinner than an adult's; therefore, they are at higher risk for sunburn and dehydration while outdoors. 60 - 80% of our lifetime exposure to damaging sunlight occurs before we are 18 years old.

Suntans look good but are actually signs of skin damage. 90% of skin changes due to aging are caused by the sun's radiation. Sand, snow, water and even a white t-shirt can reflect up to 85% of the sun's rays making exposure more intense.

Using a sunlamp more than eight times a year increases your risk of malignant melanoma by ten times! Adequate sun protection can decrease your lifetime risk of skin cancer by 80%.

What is sunburn?

Overexposure to the sun's radiation that causes a 1st or 2nd degree burn to the skin, which starts hurting 6-12 hours later.

How to Be "Sun Smart"

- Wear clothing when in the sun for long periods. Even a white cotton t-shirt only has an SPF of 30!
- Wear a hat with a brim (and make sure it shields your eyes).
- Avoid sun in the peak hours: 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.
- Wear sunglasses (your eyes get damaged too!) with UV protection.
- Protect your baby's eyes, too.

Sunburn

- Babies under 6 months should be kept out of direct sun for prolonged

periods. Place them in shaded areas always, If an infant under 1 year gets sunburn, bring him or her in. If an older child gets blistering sunburn (a 2nd degree burn!) come on in!

- Wear sunscreen or sun block.

Choosing a Sunscreen

- Never use baby oil in the sun. You're asking for big trouble!
- Find a sunscreen that blocks both UVA and UVB sun radiation.
- Pick a sunscreen with at least a SPF (sun protection factor) of 15, (preferably waterproof).
- Reapply every 30-60 minutes for regular lotions or every 2 hours for waterproof lotions.
- Newer zinc oxide sun blocks are now available in less obvious "disappearing" creams and lotions.

Treating a Sunburn

Do not:

Don't apply petroleum jelly or butter to the burn as they may make the symptoms worse.

Don't use over-the-counter creams or sprays containing benzocaine as they can cause severe allergic reactions in some people.

Do:

Apply cool compresses or tepid bathes 10-15 minutes several times a day.

Apply soothing lotions to the skin.

Use over-the-counter pain medications like Tylenol.

Drink fluids.

12-03