

Protect yourself from the sun

Sun exposure is the most preventable risk factor for all skin cancers, including melanoma. You can have fun in the sun and decrease your risk of skin cancer. Follow these simple steps:

- **Generously apply a broad-spectrum, water-resistant sunscreen** with a Sun Protection Factor (SPF) of 30 or more to all exposed skin. “Broad-spectrum” provides protection from both ultraviolet A (UVA) and ultraviolet B (UVB) rays. Reapply approximately every two hours, even on cloudy days, and after swimming or sweating.
- **Wear protective clothing**, such as a long-sleeved shirt, pants, a wide-brimmed hat, and sunglasses, where possible.
- **Avoid the mid-day sun** - The sun's rays are strongest between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. If your shadow appears to be shorter than you are, seek shade.
- **Protect children** from sun exposure. Be sure to play in the shade, use protective clothing, and apply sunscreen. Keep a careful eye on them, especially if they are infants.
- **Use extra caution near water, snow, and sand** because they reflect and intensify the damaging rays of the sun, which can increase your chances of sunburn.
- **Get vitamin D safely** through a healthy diet that may include vitamin supplements. Don't *seek* the sun. Some foods that are high in Vitamin D are: Pacific wild caught salmon, Atlantic herring and sardines, Vitasoy USA Nasoya Lite Firm Tofu, Kellogg's ALL-Bran with Extra Fiber, Soymilk and SILK, Quaker Instant Oatmeal (Apple Spice is best). Refrain from other fish. Although high in Vitamin D, they are also high in mercury. Choose only the wild caught salmon, herring and sardines.
- **Avoid tanning beds.** Ultraviolet light from the sun and tanning beds can cause skin cancer and wrinkling. If you want to look like you've been in the sun, consider using a sunless self-tanning product, but continue to use sunscreen with it.
- **Check your skin often.** If you notice anything changing, growing, or bleeding on your skin, see a dermatologist. Skin cancer is very treatable when caught early.

Sun Myths

- Getting a base tan will **not** protect your skin from sun damage.
- A sunscreen with a Sun Protection Factor (SPF) 30 **does not** provide twice the protection as a sunscreen with an SPF 15.
- Tanning in a tanning bed is safer than a tan from the sun. Both are equally extremely harmful.

How to Treat Sunburn

Sunburn is an actual radiation burn of your skin. The ultraviolet light from the sun damaged the DNA of your skin cells, triggering these cells to die. The dead cells trigger release of inflammatory signals called cytokines that lead to redness, swelling, and pain. The dead cells will slough off in a few days leading to peeling and often uncomfortable itching.

Here are several ways to treat sunburn:

- Take anti-inflammatory medications such as ibuprophen (Advil, Motrin), naproxen (Aleve) or aspirin. These stop inflammation and reduce the amount of redness and pain. It is important to take them early as they can help block the release of interleukins, the skin's main sunburn cytokine.
- Apply cool compresses every ten minutes and cool moisturizers. Try Eucerin Calming Cream or Aloe Vera. Put it in the refrigerator for a few hours before applying to your burn. Re-apply every couple of hours.
- Avoid hot showers. Instead, take a cool to lukewarm bath with Aveeno Collodial Oatmeal. The oatmeal is both a soothing anti-inflammatory and a moisturizer, which are the two things your skin needs most.
- Avoid any additional sun exposure. The best way is to cover up with cotton clothing. However, applying a sunscreen to a sunburn can worsen the inflammation and itching.
- If you have blisters, resist the urge to pop them. They form a protective seal on your skin; if they tear, the sensitive under layers of skin will be exposed and that will be very uncomfortable. Don't peel off the dead skin either; rather let it slough off on its own in the shower.
- If you have extensive burns or blistering, accompanied by vomiting and fever, call your healthcare provider.
- At all costs, avoid numbing sprays such as benzocaine. Although they can feel great when applied, they are notorious for causing allergic contact dermatitis. If you think a

sunburn is bad, try adding an incredibly itchy, allergic contact dermatitis on top of a sunburn.

- Drink plenty of fluids, especially water.