

Sunburn is the inflammation of the skin caused by excessive exposure to sunlight

### What to look for

- pink or red colour on the skin, the skin also feels tender.
- itchy blisters.
- pain and irritation of the eye associated with overexposure to ultraviolet rays from sunlight or other sources.

Gone are the days when people go to the beach hoping to get burnt in the hope of eventually getting a great tan. These days, it is almost common knowledge that too much sunburn may equal skin cancer and premature aging.

Everyone is at risk. If you have dark skin do not think you can escape the dangerous rays of the sun. Your reddened skin will normally heal within a few days but the damage can last a lifetime. If your sunburn is accompanied by blisters, the sunburn is quite severe and no doubt will be extremely painful. You will lose a few layers of skin through peeling.

Any sunburn will inevitably cause skin damage.

### Causes

The sun has two types of ultraviolet radiation important in a discussion of damaging effects to the skin.

- The first type, **UVA** radiation generally only tans skins but it is reported now that it can also take part in premature aging and wrinkling.
- **UVB** rays cause sunburn and the potential for skin cancer. You can also become burnt from reflected sunlight- from sand, water, or snow.

Certain drugs can intensify the harmful effects of UV radiation.

### Traditional Treatment

At-home care will alleviate many of the symptoms of sunburn, but no treatment can undo the damage caused by prolonged exposure to the sun.

Few cases of sunburn require medical care. If the burn is very painful or widespread, a doctor may prescribe oral corticosteroids to relieve the discomfort. Treatment for extremely severe cases of sunburn (those involving extensive blistering, dehydration, or fever) usually requires bed rest and possibly hospitalisation.

### Personal Care

Apply cold compresses or calamine lotion to ease itchiness, take a pain killer, and have a cool bath or shower for overall relief. Drink plenty of water, avoiding alcohol.

When your skin peels or the blisters break, gently remove the dried skin and apply an antiseptic ointment or cream to the skin beneath. If you feel feverish or nauseated, drink lots of fluids and see a doctor immediately.

### Prevention

The best way to prevent sunburn is to limit your exposure to direct sunlight, especially between 10:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. Take a look at your shadow: If it's shorter than your height, stay under cover.

**Don't forget to 'Slip Slop, Slap'.**

### Just a few sunsense tips for the whole family...

- Get into the habit of using a sunscreen everyday.
- Always apply your sunscreen at least 15 minutes before going outside this will allow time for the sunscreen to dry on your skin and form an effective barrier.
- Keep out of the sun between 10am and 3pm.
- Re-apply sunscreen after swimming or exercise
- Wear a hat
- UV protective swim wear and shirts to be worn by children for extra protection.

By practising these sunsense tips you should prevent excessive sun damage to you and your family's skin

**When to seek further professional advice**

- your sunburn blisters and is accompanied by chills, fever, or nausea. Severe sunburn requires professional care to limit the risk of infection and to prevent dehydration.
- your eyes are extremely painful and feel gritty. You should have your eyes examined by an ophthalmologist to determine whether the corneas are damaged.