



WHAT IS SUNBURN?

Sunburn is a red, painful skin reaction that occurs after too much exposure to ultraviolet (UV) light.

UV light is a type of radiation in sunlight.

The symptoms of a sunburn most often appear a few hours after sun exposure.

They are often worst at 6 to 36 hours after exposure.

The symptoms are short-term (temporary) and go away in 3 to 5 days.

But sunburn causes **lasting (permanent) damage** to the skin's DNA.



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WHAT CAUSES SUNBURN?

Sunburn is a type of radiation burn from UV light.

UV light from the sun is strongest during summer months between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.

But even on cloudy days, UV light can pass through clouds and cause sunburn.

UV light also comes from special light bulbs that are used in some machines, such as tanning beds.



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WHO IS AT RISK FOR SUNBURN?

You are more at risk
for sunburn if you:

- Have fair skin
- Have skin exposed to the sun during the day
- Don't wear protective clothing or sunscreen with enough sun protection factor (SPF)



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WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF SUNBURN?

Symptoms can occur a bit differently in each person.

They can include skin that is:

- Red
- Painful
- Swollen
- Warm
- Blistered
- Dry, itching, and peeling
3 to 8 days after the burn



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WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF SUNBURN?

Severe sunburn needs medical care right away.

Symptoms may include:

- Fever
- Chills
- Weakness
- Confusion
- Feeling dizzy
- Nausea
- Vomiting



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HOW IS SUNBURN DIAGNOSED?

Your **healthcare provider** will ask about your symptoms and health history.

He or she may also ask about recent sun exposure or tanning bed use.

Your provider will give you a physical exam.

This will include looking closely at your skin.



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HOW IS SUNBURN TREATED?

Treatment will depend on your symptoms and how severe the condition is.

Treatments include:

- Taking a cool (not cold) bath
- Gently applying a cool, wet cloth on the skin
- Adding moisture to the skin with lotion
- Applying aloe gel or 1% hydrocortisone cream
- Taking acetaminophen or ibuprofen for pain



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HOW IS SUNBURN TREATED?

A sunburn will most often heal on its own in 1 to 2 weeks.

While you are healing:

- **Stay out of the sun.**
More sun exposure will make the burn worse.
- **Don't pop blisters.**
This can lead to infection.
- **Drink plenty of fluids**
to prevent dehydration.



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WHAT ARE POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS OF SUNBURN?

UV rays can cause permanent damage to the skin.

Sunburn can cause premature aging of the skin, such as wrinkling and sun spots called lentigo.

Sun exposure is also the main cause of skin cancer.



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CAN SUNBURN BE PREVENTED?

A main way to prevent sunburn is to wear **sunscreen** and **protective clothing**.

Sunscreens are chemicals that block or filter sunlight.

Sunscreen comes in lotions, creams, sprays, and powders. Some have chemicals that absorb and filter the sunlight, such as oxybenzone and avobenzone. Others have chemicals that physically block the light, such as zinc oxide or titanium dioxide.

No sunscreen blocks 100% of UV light.

But they **help protect** the skin.



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CAN SUNBURN BE PREVENTED?

When using sunscreen:

- Wear sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 30 or higher.
- Pick broad spectrum sunscreen that blocks both UVA and UVB rays.
- Use a waterproof or water resistant sunscreen.



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CAN SUNBURN BE PREVENTED?

When using sunscreen:

- Apply to all exposed skin, including ears, lips, back of the neck, and tops of the feet.
- Apply it 30 minutes before going outside.
- Reapply it every 2 hours, or after swimming, exercising or sweating.



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CAN SUNBURN BE PREVENTED?

Other ways to prevent sunburn include:

- Stay out of the sun from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. This is when the sun's UV rays are strongest.
- Wear a hat with a wide brim.
- Wear clothing that protects your skin from the sun.

Some clothing is rated with UV protection factor (UPF).



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CAN SUNBURN BE PREVENTED?

Other ways to prevent sunburn include:

- Don't use a tanning bed.
- Look for shade. Shaded areas get less UV radiation.
- Use sunscreen even in the shade. UV rays are reflected off other surfaces such as sand, snow, cement, and water.



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WHEN SHOULD I CALL MY HEALTHCARE PROVIDER?

Call the healthcare provider right away if you have:

- Blisters
- Fever
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Chills
- Dizziness
- Confusion



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