

Sunny Days & Your Skin



It is now well known that exposure to sun puts people at risk for skin cancer and premature aging and that most of that exposure comes during childhood (80% of a person's lifetime sun exposure occurs before they are 21). Regular use of sunscreen in children can lower their risk of skin cancer by almost 78%.

Here are a few tips and trivia about this wonderful (but often abused) organ:

- Apply the sunscreen in a thick coat at least 30-45 minutes before going outside and reapply every two hours (or more often if he is swimming or perspiring heavily).
- It is ironic that tanned skin is associated with a youthful, healthy look. Steady tanning can lead to premature wrinkles, sags and discoloration.
- Sun damage is cumulative and irreversible. Once the skin is so affected, no amount of facials or moisturizers can reverse the damage, which usually does not show up until later in life.
- Scars have less pigment than the rest of your skin, so they're especially vulnerable to sunburn--and prolonged redness. You should make certain to cover all exposed scars with a sunscreen with an SPF of 25 or higher.
- A simple, moderately severe sunburn damages the blood vessels to such an extent that it takes four to fifteen months for them to return to their normal condition.
- In the United States, more than 500,000 new cases of skin cancer are found each year. This is why one in seven Americans can expect to get skin cancer.
- Some diuretics, antibiotics, tranquilizers, birth control pills and diabetes medications can add more salt to your sunburn wounds. They can make you sun-sensitive. So can some medicated soaps, perfumes and "wrinkle removers". So if you use any of these medications or products, doctors advise you to take extra precautions when exposing your skin to the sun.
- Deet lowers the effectiveness of sunscreens, so use a higher SPF if you are using a combination product that has both a sunscreen and an insect repellent.
- In only one square inch of human skin there are 19 million cells, 625 sweat glands, 90 oil glands, 65 hairs, 19 feet of blood vessels, 19,000 sensory cells, and over 20 million microscopic animals.

Sunburn First Aid:

- Try taking a cool bath or shower. Or place wet, cold wash cloths on the burn for 10 to 15 minutes, several times a day. You can mix baking soda in the water to help relieve the pain. (Small children may become easily chilled, so keep the water tepid.)
- Apply a soothing lotion to the skin.
- Aloe gel is a common household remedy for sunburns. Aloe contains active compounds that help stop pain and inflammation of the skin.
- An over-the-counter pain medication, such as acetaminophen or ibuprofen may be helpful. **DO NOT** give aspirin to children.