

Sunburn

Sunburn is when the skin becomes damaged from the sun's UV (ultraviolet) rays and is a form of radiation burn. It can be a serious and, in some cases, life-threatening condition that can have immediate and long term health effects.

It tends to affect those with **light or pale skin, freckles, fair hair**, and those whose exposure to the sun is limited to short, intense bursts – such as a holiday. The symptoms are **red, sore, hot, itchy skin that may blister** in extreme cases, and often peels a couple of days. The sufferer may also feel **nauseous or vomit, experience fever or chills, and may pass out**.

Mild sunburn won't normally require medical treatment, and you can help your skin feel more comfortable by:

- Cooling the area with a cold compress, a cold flannel, or a cool shower or bath
- Taking a painkiller – always follow instructions on the pack or from your pharmacist or GP
- Rehydrate! Drink plenty of water
- Keep your skin cool and moist, avoid clothing or bedding that rubs

If you experience any other symptoms, such as skin swelling, severe blistering, vomiting, feel dizzy or a fever, you must seek medical attention as you may be suffering from heat stroke or more severe burns. **Call NHS Direct for advice.**

Long Term Skin Effects

Any change in colour to your skin as a result of sun exposure indicates that your skin has been damaged. Sun-exposed skin, particularly if you are not used to it, can feel sensitive, taught, warm and uncomfortable.

Incidence of skin cancer in the UK have increased hugely over recent years, with people over 65 now thought to be seven times more likely to develop malignant melanoma now compared to 40 years ago, and it is believed that just one incidence of blistering sunburn in childhood more than doubles the chance of developing melanoma in adulthood.

If that's not impetus enough to avoid excessive sun exposure, it is thought that that the sun's rays account for a whopping 80% of the signs of skin aging! UV rays lead to skin pigmentation, a reduction in elasticity and a worsening of skin texture. What better reason is there for finding a cool shady spot by the pool to relax, or living the Mediterranean way with a siesta during the hottest parts of the day?



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