

Sun Protection and Sunburn

There's no safe or healthy way to get a tan. A tan doesn't protect your skin from the sun's harmful effects. Aim to strike a balance between protecting yourself from the sun and getting enough vitamin D from sunlight. Sunburn increases your risk of skin cancer. Sunburn doesn't just happen on holiday – you can burn in the UK, even when it's cloudy.

How can I avoid sunburn?

Sun safety tips

Spend time in the shade when the sun is strongest. In the UK, this is between 11am and 3pm from March to October.

Make sure you;

- **Shade** - Spend time in the shade between 11am and 3pm
- **Cover up** - With suitable clothing such as wide brimmed hat, long sleeved top and long trousers or skirts
- **Sunscreen** – Use at least factor 15 sunscreen
- **Take extra care with children** - Children and the elderly are particularly prone to sun burn
- **Protect your eyes in the sun** - A day at the beach without proper eye protection can cause a temporary but painful burn to the surface of the eye, similar to sunburn. Reflected sunlight from snow, sand, concrete and water, and artificial light from sunbeds, is particularly dangerous. Avoid looking directly at the sun, as this can cause permanent eye damage. Use sunglasses with wraparound lenses or wide arms with the CE Mark and European Standard EN 1836:2005

When using sunscreen make sure you;

- Use a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 15 to protect against UVB
- Ensure it has at least four-star UVA protection. A "UVA" in a circle indicates that it meets the EU standard.
- Do not use it past its expiry date - most sunscreens have a shelf life of 2 to 3 years.
- Don't spend any longer in the sun than you would without sunscreen.

If you've had skin cancer, you should avoid spending too long in the sun. Your skin cancer specialist might suggest a high factor sunscreen such as SPF 50 on any exposed skin. The SPF is to give you extra protection. It does not mean you can safely sunbathe.

How do I treat Sunburn?

If you or your child has sunburn, you should get out of the sun as soon as possible – head indoors or into a shady area. You can usually treat mild sunburn at home, although there are some circumstances where you should get medical advice.

To help relieve your symptoms until your skin heals:

- Cool your skin by having a cold bath or shower, sponging it with cold water, or holding a cold flannel to it
- Use lotions containing aloe vera to soothe and moisturise your skin
- Drink plenty of fluids to cool you down and prevent [dehydration](#)
- Take painkillers, such as [ibuprofen](#) or [paracetamol](#), to relieve pain (but don't give aspirin to children under 16)
- Try to avoid all sunlight, including through windows, by covering up the affected areas of skin until it's fully healed.

Speak to your pharmacist - for advice if you're not sure what to do.

When should I seek advice?

Contact your GP, go to [your nearest NHS walk-in centre](#), or call [NHS 111](#) if you feel unwell or you're concerned about your sunburn, particularly if you're burnt over a large area or have any of the more severe symptoms listed below.

You should also see your GP if a young child or baby has sunburn as their skin is particularly sensitive.

Signs of severe sunburn can include:

- Blistering or swelling of the skin
- Chills
- A high temperature (fever) of 38°C (100.4F) or above
- Dizziness, [headaches](#) and feeling sick – [symptoms of heat exhaustion](#)

More information is available at the following website

- NHS website - www.nhs.uk
- Or visit your local pharmacy for advice

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