

Health Point: Staying Healthy in the Sun



Do you like to go out in the sun?



- Now that it is summer, you may be thinking about spending more time outdoors.
- There are lots of fun things to do in the sun – go to the beach, have a picnic in the park, or just take a walk and enjoy the weather!
- Even though the sun is fun, it can also be dangerous to your health.

The sun can be unhealthy for your skin and for your eyes.



- The sun can cause your skin to burn.
 - A sunburn hurts.
 - Sunburns can also make you more likely to develop skin cancer.
- The sun can also cause your eyes to burn.
 - When your eyes are damaged by the sun, you may be more likely to develop certain eye problems later in your life.

Anyone can get sunburned, but some people are more sensitive to the sun than others.

- You should be extra careful in the sun if you:
 - Have fair skin, light-colored hair, or freckles
 - Have had many sunburns in the past
 - Have a family history of skin cancer



Medicine can also make your skin more sensitive to the sun.

- Medications that can increase your risk for sunburn include:

- Antihistamines used in cold and allergy medications
- Antibiotics
- Antidepressants
- Cardiovascular drugs
- Oral medications for diabetes



- Ask your doctor if your medicines will make your skin more sensitive to the sun.

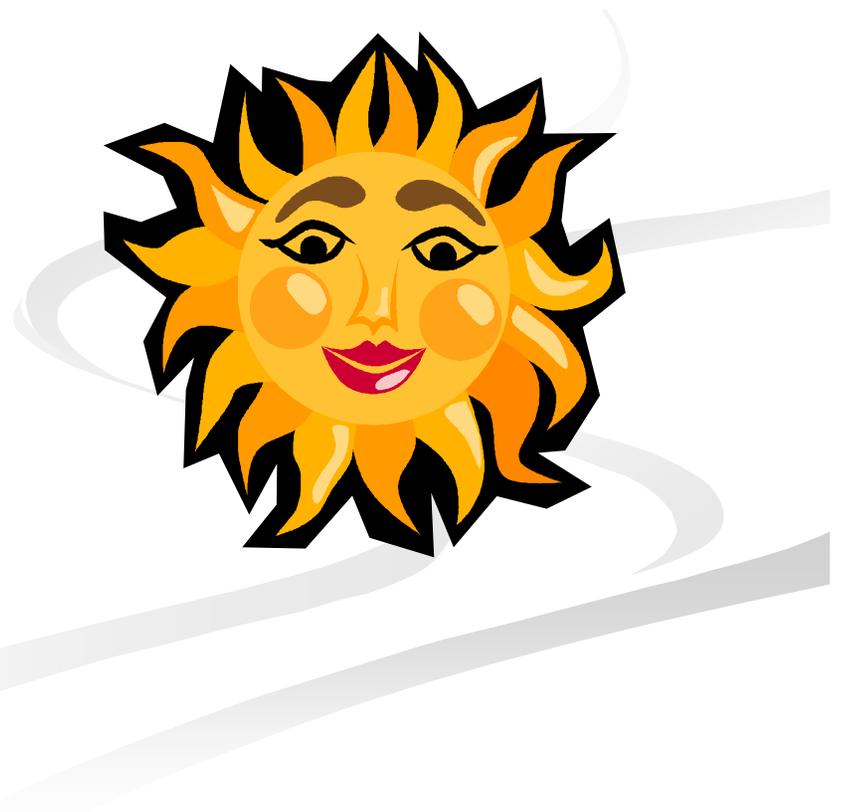
It is important for you to protect yourself when you go out in the sun.

- The sun is fun, but if you do not protect yourself you could get a sunburn.
- Getting sunburns and spending time in the sun can increase your risk of developing skin cancer.
 - Skin cancer is a serious disease that can even kill you.



You will be able to tell if you have a sunburn by the look and feel of your skin.

- If you have a sunburn your skin will turn red.
- Your skin will also feel hot to the touch.
- It may also feel dry and scratchy.



If you get a sunburn, follow these tips to feel better.

- Avoid the sun until your skin is healed.
- Take a cool (not cold) bath or gently apply a cool, wet cloth to any sunburned areas on your body.
- Put some aloe vera gel on your skin (you can buy this at most pharmacies).
- Take an over-the-counter pain medication.
- If the sunburn is so bad that blisters develop, call your doctor.



There are things you can do to protect your body from the sun.

- Plan activities that you can do out of the sun between 10am and 4pm – this is when the sun is the strongest.



- If you do go out in the sun, prepare yourself!
 - Wear a hat.
 - Wear sunglasses with 100% UV protection.
 - Use sunscreen with a Sun Protection Factor (SPF) of 15 or higher.
 - Put on a lip balm with sunscreen in it.

Once you are outside, you can continue to protect yourself all day.

- Put on more sunscreen every two to three hours.
- If you are swimming or sweating, put on sunscreen more often.
- Stay in the shade as much as possible; bring an umbrella to make your own shade.



In addition to sunburn, spending too much time in the sun could cause you to suffer dehydration or heat stroke.

- Dehydration is when your body loses too much water.



- Signs of dehydration include feeling tired and thirsty, and having dry lips or a dry tongue.

- Heat stroke is when your body gets too hot and is unable to cool itself down.

- Signs of heat stroke include fever, vomiting, dry skin, and shortness of breath.

If you think you have dehydration, you should drink water right away and take a rest out of the sun.

- You can also prevent dehydration by drinking water before you feel thirsty and drinking water often when you are spending time in the sun.
 - You can also drink juice or Gatorade.
 - When you are spending time in the sun, try to avoid drinking tea, coffee, soda, or alcohol.
- Remember to take breaks in the shade throughout the day.

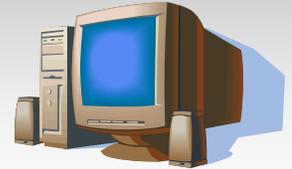


If you think you are suffering from heat stroke, you should call 9-1-1 or go to the emergency room quickly.

- If it is not treated, heat stroke can lead to death.
- You can prevent heat stroke by drinking plenty of water during hot weather and trying to stay out of the sun as much as possible.
- If it is hot outside, do not stay in a parked car with all of the windows closed.



To learn more about staying healthy in the sun, check out these articles and websites!



■ DDS Safety Net articles:

- www.ddssafety.net/Archives/Archives/Consumers/SummerSun.aspx
- www.ddssafety.net/Archives/Archives/Consumers/SummerSafety.aspx

■ Other websites:

- The American Cancer Society: www.cancer.org
- The National Safety Council: www.nsc.org/ehc/sunSAFE.htm

You can print this checklist to
remind yourself about how to
stay healthy in the sun.

www.ddssafety.net/HealthPoints/SunHealth/SunHealthChecklist.pdf

