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HOURS URGENT CARE

Sun Exposure—the Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

Soaking in the summertime rays is usually thought of as a good thing. The sun is rich in Vitamin D and gives skin a healthy-appearing glow. Unfortunately, when it comes to the sun, there is a high risk of “too much of a good thing.” Negative effects range from a sunburn or sun poisoning to skin cancer.

My first job out of residency was as a cruise ship doctor. Seasickness and sunburn were my life for three and a half years. I witnessed many vacations ruined by too much sun! While sunburn is the short-term risk of sun exposure, long-term effects include wrinkles, freckles, and skin cancer.

Tips to prevent sun-related skin problems:

Suntan gradually as over-exposure will burn your skin. Apply sunscreen and lip balm with an SPF of 15 at least 30 minutes before sun exposure. Make sure you're not taking medication that increases sun sensitivity. Avoid peak sun exposure hours (10 am–2 pm). Overcast weather doesn't signify safety from UVB rays, the lighter your skin the more prone you are to burning. Eighty percent of a person's lifetime sun exposure is acquired before age 18, therefore parents should foster skin cancer prevention habits.

Tips for treatment of a mild/moderate sunburn:

- Get out of the sun
- Take a cool shower or bath to soothe the pain
- Take Aspirin or Ibuprofen
- Apply aloe vera plant, lotion/gel or cooling agent. Do not apply butter or oil to a burn

Cases of severe sunburn may require a visit to your family doctor, Urgent Care Center, or the ER. Treatment may include steroid shots and/or prescription creams or pills.

Remember...An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. ▀

As seen in

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