

## Skin Health: The Summer Months

### Inside this issue:

#### Risk of Sun Exposure

#### Sunscreen Tips

#### Sunburn Treatment

#### Photosensitivity (drug induced)

With the Summer months just around the corner, we at ProAct wanted to help you and your family prepare to have a safe and enjoyable summer season.

It is inevitable that warmer days will mean more time outside. While we encourage you to get more active and enjoy the warmer weather, we wanted to give you some tips on protecting your skin from the sun as well as other outdoor tips to help keep you healthy during these busy months.

Our skin acts as a natural barrier of defense, protecting our muscles, bones, and internal organs. Our skin also plays a vital role in serving as a barrier to prevent bacteria from entering our bodies. The average square inch of skin holds over 600 sweat glands, 20 blood vessels, and over a thousand nerve endings. Needless to say, it is important to take care of our bodies first line of defense.

As we age, our skin thins and becomes wrinkled. Natural glands that moisturize our skin become less active, leading to drier skin that becomes more fragile, and less flexible over time. Most changes that we associate with skin aging are actually caused by years of exposure to ultraviolet rays.

### What are Ultraviolet Rays?

Ultraviolet rays are invisible, but intense rays from the sun. There are two main types of Ultraviolet Rays, UVA and UVB. UVA primarily leads to premature aging of the skin, causing aging, wrinkles, and tanning of the skin, while UVB causes sunburns. It is important to remember that both types of UV rays can be harmful to your skin. Even on cloudy summer days, when you may feel that you are protected it is important to know you are still at risk from the sun's harmful UV rays.

While the immediate damage done by excessive sun exposure seen in the form of sunburns and blisters are obvious, the long term impact is even more damaging. Exposure to Ultraviolet rays can cause deep wrinkles, benign (non-cancerous) spots, and even skin cancer!

### What is SPF?

SPF is the "Sun Protection Factor." Sun care products contain varying levels of protection up to SPF 100+. SPF is an indicator of the time needed to cause a sunburn vs. unprotected skin, however all sunscreen should be regularly reapplied.

### SPF: Is more really better?

The SPF value however can be deceiving and many consumers often think that SPF 30 is twice as protective as SPF 15, or that applying SPF 15 twice will provide similar protection as SPF 30 applied once.

Neither of these myths are true. In fact, current guidelines only recommend application of SPF 15 for most individuals. For those with fair skin, prone to burning, or children, a SPF 30 or 45 product may be appropriate.

A SPF 30 product actually blocks ~97% of the UVB rays, while SPF 45 blocks ~98%. Therefore applying any product claiming SPF protection greater than 50 provides little increased protection compared to SPF 45.

### Protecting Your Skin

The following three tips can be used alone, or ideally, together to help prevent skin damage:

1. Wear Protective clothing. Tightly woven long sleeve shirts and long sleeve pants provide excellent protection against the sun's rays. Protect your face and ears with a wide brimmed hat that will shade your head. Many bathing suits are now made of cool, breathable material that have built in SPF protection.
2. Avoid the sun during the highest intensity hours of 10am—4pm.
3. Use a sunscreen with at least SPF 15, however SPF 30 is preferred for most as few individuals apply as frequently or as thoroughly as recommended.

### Applying Sunscreen

Sunscreen should be applied 15-30 minutes prior to heading outside to allow for maximum absorption.

It is important that an adequate amount of sunscreen be applied over all exposed areas of your body. As much as one ounce (shot glass) full of sunscreen may be needed to cover your entire body.

Sunscreen should be reapplied every 2 hours, or after excessive sweating or becoming wet.

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## Want to Save Money? Contact Us!

While it is important to keep open lines of communication with your physician and local pharmacist regarding your prescriptions, we understand that the amount of information received can sometimes be overwhelming.

We would like to remind you that our clinical department is here to help! We want to see our members taking the right medication at the right cost. While not all medications have a true generic, there are often therapeutic alternatives available that could provide the same benefit, while costing you less.

Please feel free to contact our clinical department at any time for questions regarding your prescriptions, or for cost saving alternatives.

### Sunscreen: Label Changes?

The FDA is currently looking label changes for sunscreen that would prevent the terms “Waterproof, “Sweat-proof,” and “all-day protection” as well as capping the SPF protection at SPF 50. While some products may be sweat resistant, or water resistant, none can withstand prolonged periods of either. As previously mentioned, SPF 50 or greater provides negligible extra protection vs. SPF 45 products. Therefore to avoid confusion or added sense of security with a sunscreen product, the FDA is considering mandating the removal of these comments from sunscreen products.

### Medications that Increase risk of Burning:

Sun sensitivity, or photosensitivity is a reaction that occurs when UV radiation from sunlight reacts with a medication that you have taken leading to sunburn like symptoms on your skin. While the severity of the reaction will depend on the individual, the drug, the amount of drug and duration of exposure to sunlight, it is important to take extra precautions if you are taking a medication that can cause photosensitivity. Carefully read any information provided with your medication or ask your pharmacist if your medication will cause photosensitivity.

The following medications can lead to photosensitivity with varying severity:

- Acne Treatments: Topical Benzoyl peroxide, oral accutane, doxycycline, and isotretinoin
- Antibiotics: Tetracyclines, sulfa products such as Bactrim, quinolones including ciprofloxacin, and levofloxacin
- Diabetes: Sulfonylureas including glyburide
- Heart medications: Amiodarone, nifedipine, quinidine, and diltiazem
- Psychiatric medications: Tricyclic antidepressants such as Nortriptyline, and Tofranil

### UV Index

The National Weather Service and the Environmental Protection Agency developed a rating system to help individuals understand the amount of UV radiation that they will be exposed to on any given day. This index is a number system from 1-11+, the greater the number, the greater the risk due to exposure

UV Index	Exposure Risk
≤ 2	Low
3-5	Moderate
6-7	High
8-10	Very High
≥ 11	Extreme

### Treating a Sunburn

The first and most important step to treating a sunburn is to prevent further exposure to the sun. The following tips are also useful in decreasing pain and increasing recovery time from the sunburn:

- Cool bath (avoid bath salts, oils and perfumes), or Cool compresses applied to irritated skin
- Drink plenty of liquids to stay well hydrated
- Oral medications such as ibuprofen, naproxen and acetaminophen to help with pain
- When to see a doctor:
  - Severe pain, headache, blistering, fever, confusion, fainting, nausea and vomiting
  - Oral and topical prescription medications may be prescribed for severe sunburns

**Did you Know?**  
 You are at risk for sunburn even on cloudy days, in winter months, and especially vulnerable on the water? UV light can penetrate through clouds to the earth’s surface. Snow and water can reflect up to 80% of the sun’s light, which can lead to sunburns on cold winter days, and severe burns on warm sunny days spent in or on the water.