



**KAISER PERMANENTE®**

## Sunburn

A sunburn is usually a first-degree burn that affects only the outer layer of the skin. However, every time you or your child gets a sunburn, the risk for skin cancer is increased—even years later. Exposure to the sun is a major factor in all types of skin cancers. It also leads to age spots and weathered skin.

Fortunately, sunburn is easy to prevent. You should get in the habit of applying sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 15 every time you're going to be in the sun for more than 15 minutes. Reapply sunscreen as directed by the manufacturer as long as you're outdoors. If you're allergic to PABA—the active ingredient in many sunscreens—ask your pharmacist about sunscreens that don't contain this ingredient. There are new chemical-free sunscreens that leave a minimal residue on the skin, but almost never irritate the skin.

Here are two other tips for preventing sunburn:

- 1.) Reduce sun exposure between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m., when the burning rays are the strongest.
- 2.) Wear light-colored, clothes that fit comfortably and cover the body as much as possible. Wearing a broad-brimmed hat to shade your face is another good idea. The skin that is exposed, should be covered with sunscreen. And remember: nothing protects against sunburn as well as being in the shade.

A sunburn is at its worst 24 to 48 hours after exposure. After that it begins to heal. Since there is no medication that will speed healing, few people with sunburn need to see a doctor for treatment; a doctor can usually do no more than offer reassurance and advice.

There are home treatments that can help, however. To soothe damaged skin, try cool baths or compresses. A good method is to take a lukewarm 20-minute bath (without soap) with half a cup of Aveeno-Colloidal Oatmeal or baking soda, followed by a thin application of Eucerin cream, lubricating lotion, or plain Vaseline. Aloe, either in a gel or right off the plant, may also help to soothe the skin. To relieve the pain of sunburn, try acetaminophen (such as Tylenol), ibuprofen (such as Motrin), or aspirin. Don't give aspirin to young people under 20, however. If you have a mild fever and headache, lie down in a cool, quiet room. Also, drink lots of fluids and make sure your children do too. Dehydration can occur after prolonged exposure to the sun.

If you develop signs of heat stroke, such as fatigue, weakness, dizziness, nausea, or cool and clammy skin, call your doctor or health care professional. Also call if you feel very ill, if a sunburn is accompanied by severe blistering and a fever of 102 degrees or higher, or if you experience dizziness or vision problems after you've cooled off.



For additional health information you can trust:

- Log on to our members-only Web site at [www.kaiserpermanente.org/california](http://www.kaiserpermanente.org/california), then click the "Kaiser Permanente Members Only" button
- Visit your local Kaiser Permanente Health Education Center
- Check your Kaiser Permanente Healthwise Handbook
- Listen to the Kaiser Permanente Healthphone messages at 1-800-33 ASK ME (1-800-332-7563)

To get your free Handbook and Healthphone Directory, call 1-800-464-4000.

The information presented here is not intended to diagnose health problems or to take the place of professional medical care. If you have persistent health problems or if you have additional questions, please consult with your doctor or other health care professional.

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