

TREATING A SUNBURN

Your skin can burn if it gets too much sun without proper protection from sunscreen and clothes. To help heal and soothe stinging skin, it is important to begin treating sunburn as soon as you notice it. The first thing you should do is get out of the sun – and preferably indoors.

Once indoors, these dermatologists' tips can help relieve the discomfort:

- **Put a cold, damp towel on your skin.** Do this for 10 or 15 minutes a few times every day. That will help take some of the heat out of your skin. You also can take frequent cool baths or showers to help relieve the pain. As soon as you get out of the bathtub or shower, gently pat yourself dry, but leave a little water on your skin. Then, apply a moisturizer to help trap the water in your skin. This will help ease the dryness.
- **Use a moisturizer that contains aloe vera or soy to help soothe sunburned skin.** Lotions that have something called aloe vera in them help make your skin feel better. Be careful not to use lotions or creams that have any of these things listed in the ingredients: petroleum, benzocaine, or lidocaine. Things with petroleum trap the heat in your skin (and you don't want that!) and benzocaine and lidocaine can bother and irritate your skin. If a particular area feels especially uncomfortable, you may want to apply a hydrocortisone cream that you can buy without a prescription.
- **Ask your parents about taking ibuprofen if the sunburn really hurts.** This will help reduce any swelling, redness and discomfort.
- **Drink extra water.** Sunburn makes you get very dry inside, so you need to drink a lot. Drinking extra water when you are sunburned helps prevent dehydration.
- **Leave blisters alone.** If your skin blisters, don't pop them because that makes the sunburn worse. Blistering skin means you have a second-degree sunburn. Allow the blisters to heal and protect you from infection.
- **Tell your parents if you feel sick.** They might need to take you to the doctor if you feel dizzy, weak, sick to your stomach, cold, or just not yourself. Those things can mean the sunburn is making you really sick and you need help.
- **Take extra care to protect sunburned skin while it heals.** Wear clothing that covers your skin when outdoors. Tightly-woven fabrics work best. When you hold the fabric up to a bright light, you shouldn't see any light coming through.

Although it may seem like a temporary condition, sunburn – a result of skin receiving too much exposure from the sun's ultraviolet (UV) rays – can cause long-lasting damage to the skin. This damage increases a person's risk for getting skin cancer, making it critical to protect the skin from the sun.

For questions about your sunburn, or to learn how to better protect your skin from the sun, see a board-certified dermatologist.

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