



Protect Your Skin from Sun Damage

Sun damage builds over time

You may walk away from the building site with a suntan, but that's not all you're getting. Excessive sun exposure is responsible for most of the skin damage associated with aging. This damage accumulates slowly over time and starts at an early age. Much of the skin damage is merely cosmetic, but some effects, such as skin cancer, are more serious.

The hazards caused by working in the sun are the Ultraviolet - UV - rays in strong sunlight.

Who is at risk?

People with pale skin are at serious risk of burning and skin damage. Those with fair/ red hair with a large amount of freckles or with a family history of skin cancer.

People with a large number of moles.

The dangers

Short term - sun exposure to pale skin can cause burns leading to blistering.

Long term - increased risk of developing skin cancer in later life. Too much sun will also prematurely age skin making it leathery, mottled and wrinkled.

Abnormal Reactions to Sunlight - Certain medicines, contact with plants and contact with some chemicals used at work (coal-tar and pitch products, wood preservatives, dyes etc.) can make your skin more sensitive to sunlight. Consult your physician for further advice.



Protection from the sun

Avoid reddening of the skin.

Reddening of the skin is a sign of skin damage as well as an early sign of burning.

Take your breaks in the shade when possible. This will keep you cool and reduce the chances of burning and skin damage.

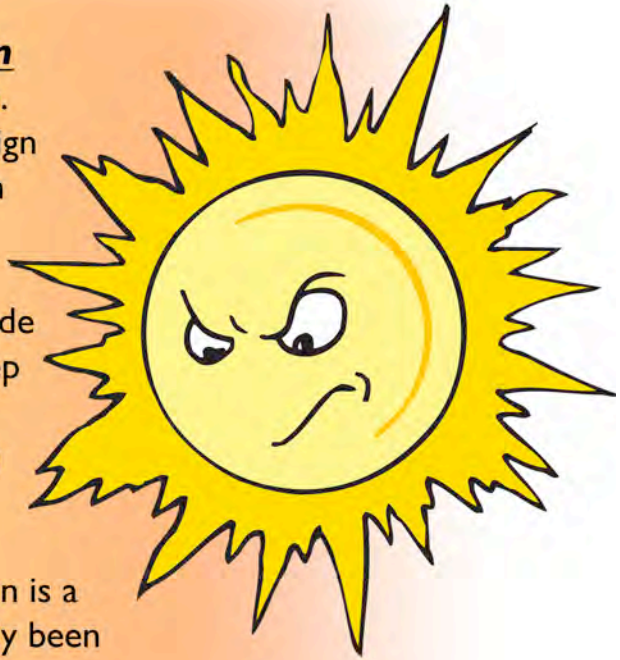
Don't try to tan. Tanned skin is a sign that the skin has already been damaged.

Cover up. Ordinary clothing will stop most UV effects.

Wearing a hat with a wide-brim will shade your face and head, the areas which suffer most from sunlight. A hanging flap can protect the back of your neck whilst wearing a hard hat.

Keep your top on. Working in the sun is particularly harmful around midday and wearing a shirt or t-shirt is vital to reduce risk of skin damage

Headwear and clothing are the best forms of protection but sunscreens are useful for parts of the body not easily protected by clothing. Use a sunscreen cream or lotion with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 15 or more for protection against UVA and UVB.



How to Check Your Skin

It's important to check your own skin, preferably once a month. A self exam is best done in a well-lit room in front of a full-length mirror. A hand-held mirror can be used for areas that are hard to see. A spouse or close friend or family member may be able to help you with these exams, especially for those hard-to-see areas like the lower back or the back of your thighs.

The first time you inspect your skin, spend a fair amount of time carefully going over the entire surface of your skin. Learn the pattern of moles, blemishes, freckles, and other marks on your skin so that you'll notice any changes next time. Any trouble spots should be seen by a doctor.

It's important to know the difference between melanoma and a harmless mole. A normal mole is most often an evenly colored brown, tan, or black spot on the skin. It can be either flat or raised. It can be round or oval. Moles are usually less than 1/4 inch in diameter, or about the width of a pencil eraser. Moles can be present at birth or they can appear later. Several moles can appear at the same time. Once a mole has developed, it will usually stay the same size, shape, and color for many years. Moles may fade away in older people. Most people have moles, and almost all moles are harmless. But it is important to recognize changes in a mole – such as its size, shape, or color – that suggest a melanoma may be developing. Be sure to show your doctor any area that concerns you. A qualified doctor should be able to identify any suspicious areas you may have.



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