



BASIC INFORMATION

WHAT IS SUNBURN?

- An injury to the skin resulting from prolonged or intense sun exposure, without protection, causing redness and sometimes blisters on the affected skin area
- Most sunburns affect the outer layer of the skin causing a first-degree or second-degree burn
- Sunburn can affect any area of the body

WHAT ARE COMMON SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS?

- Red or pink skin that feels hot to the touch
- Pain or tenderness (usually worse in the first 6 to 48 hours)
- Itching
- Blisters
- Swelling
- Skin may peel
- Fever, nausea, headache, and faintness (when the sunburn is spread over a large area of skin)

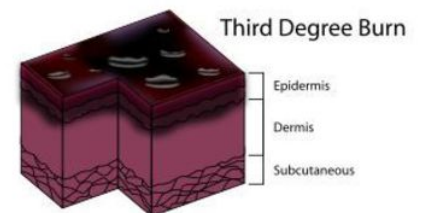
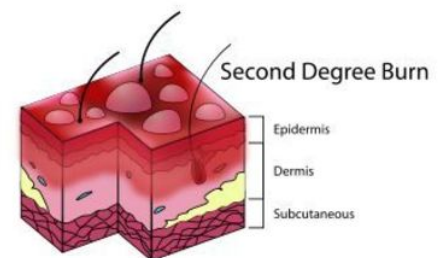
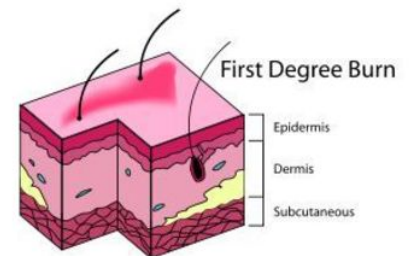


Image of the 3 Degrees of Burns courtesy of K. Aainsqatsi. [CC BY-SA 3.0]. Available at http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/9/93/Burn_Degree_Diagram.svg

WHAT CAUSES SUNBURN?

- Overexposure to the sun's ultraviolet (UV) rays
- The melanin (a pigment in the skin that protects the skin from the sun) cannot maintain its natural level of protection, causing the skin to burn
 - A suntan is the body's natural way of blocking the UV rays in order to prevent sunburn
 - The amount of melanin in the skin is genetic, and some people don't produce enough to protect the skin well

WHAT INCREASES MY RISK?

- Fair skin, light eye color, red or blonde hair
- Sunny or warm climates
- High-altitude
- Occupations that expose you to the sun (such as gardeners or farmers)
- Sunbathing or outdoor swimming
- A history of previous sunburns
- Alcohol consumption while engaged in outdoor activities
- Taking medications that can increase your photosensitivity

WHAT ARE POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS?

- Frequent sunburns may cause your skin to
 - Show signs of premature aging
 - Become thickened
 - Discolor or form dark spots
 - Become dry, leathery, and wrinkled
- Severe sunburns significantly increase your risk of developing skin cancer

- Blisters may form and become infected
- In severe cases, dehydration or heat stroke may occur
- Eye damage

WHAT CAN I EXPECT?

- Sunburn can usually be self-managed at home with over-the-counter products
- Recovery time is usually within 3 days up to 3 weeks
- Affected skin may peel or shed
 - This usually begins 3-8 days after exposure

HOW DO I REDUCE MY RISK?

- Stay out of the sun between the hours of 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. (when the sun's rays are the strongest)
- Use sunscreen daily with a sun protective factor (SPF) of 15 or greater (even during cloudy days)
- If spending extended time outdoors, reapply sunscreen per product instructions or at least every 3 hours, especially when swimming
- When you go outside, wear wide-brimmed hats and sunglasses that filter UV light and clothes that cover large areas of skin
- In infants and children
 - Babies under six months of age should never be exposed to the sun
 - Babies older than six months should be protected from the sun, wear UV-blocking sunglasses to protect their eyes
 - Children should follow the same protections as adults

DIAGNOSIS AND TREATMENT

WHAT GENERAL MEASURES SHOULD I TAKE?

- Your healthcare provider may perform a physical examination of the affected skin area and ask questions about your symptoms and sun-exposure
- Self-Care
 - Cool down as soon as possible, cover up and get out of the sun
 - Apply a cold compress to the affected skin area
 - Take a shower or cool bath
 - If bathing, you can sprinkle the water with a topical emollient or baking soda before bathing
 - Apply aloe vera lotion or hydrocortisone cream to the affected skin area while skin is still damp
- Activity
 - Rest until your symptoms improve
 - Ensure burned area does not get re-exposed to sunlight while healing
- Diet
 - Drink plenty of fluids and remain properly hydrated
- Helpful Links
 - To learn more: Skin Cancer Foundation
 - Website: www.skincancer.org
 - To learn more: American Academy of Dermatology
 - Website: www.aad.org

WHAT ARE COMMON LABS AND TESTS?

- Your doctor may perform a physical skin examination of the affected area to determine the severity of the burn
- Tests to determine abnormal sunburn reaction (photo testing) may be necessary if you experience sunburns after minor exposures to sunlight

WHAT ARE MY TREATMENT OPTIONS?

- Once sunburn occurs, get out of the sun
- Infants under one year, treat sunburn as an emergency and contact their doctor
- Apply cool wet compresses or take a cool bath or shower
- Aloe vera lotions may help reduce pain, swelling, and peeling of the affected skin area
- Over-the-counter pain medication or creams may help reduce your symptoms
 - Ibuprofen, aspirin or acetaminophen
 - Hydrocortisone cream (0.5%-1%)
 - Sunburn treatment lotions
- Prescription medications if the burn is severe
- If blisters form
 - Cover lightly with gauze to prevent infection
 - Try not to break the blisters
 - If blisters break, gently clean that area with mild soap and water

WHAT MEDICATIONS MAY BE PRESCRIBED?

- Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory medications
- Pain relief medications or cortisone
- Topical aloe vera gels are sometimes recommended

WHAT CAUTIONS SHOULD I TAKE?

- Make sure to drink plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration
- Keep skin moisturized
- Try not to break blisters
- Protect your sunburn from further sun exposure

WHEN SHOULD I SEEK MEDICAL HELP?

- Infants under one year, treat sunburn as an emergency and contact their doctor
- Infants and children over one year, contact their doctor if
 - Blistering
 - Lethargy

- Fever over 101°F (38.3°C)
- Severe pain
- Signs of dehydration such as infrequent urination
- Seek medical advice if you have the following symptoms
 - High fever
 - Fluid-filled blisters covering a large portion of your body
 - Sunburn that is severe and covers more than 15% of your body
 - Severe pain that persists longer than 48 hours
 - Headache, confusion, nausea or chills
 - Signs of an infection from blister(s)

MY HEALTHCARE PROVIDER'S COMMENTS

REFERENCES

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