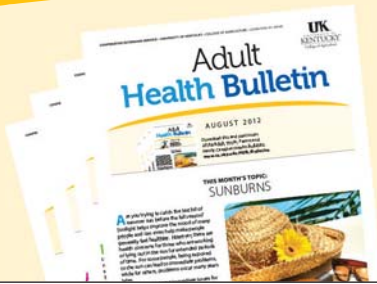


Adult Health Bulletin



AUGUST 2012

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THIS MONTH'S TOPIC: SUNBURNS

Are you trying to catch the last bit of summer sun before the fall season? Sunlight helps improve the mood of many people and can even help make people generally feel healthier. However, there are health concerns for those who are working or lying out in the sun for extended periods of time. For some people, being exposed to the sun can lead to immediate problems, while for others, problems occur many years later.

The sun can cause immediate issues for those who are prone to sunburn. Sunburn can be mild, where the skin may turn pink or red and be itchy or uncomfortable. Sunburn can also be much more serious causing blisters and even damaging nerves located directly under the skin. The more severe the sunburn, the longer it will take to heal.



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If you are outside between the hours of 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. you are at a higher risk for more severe sunburns.

Continued from page 1

There are long term concerns for those who are exposed to the sun:

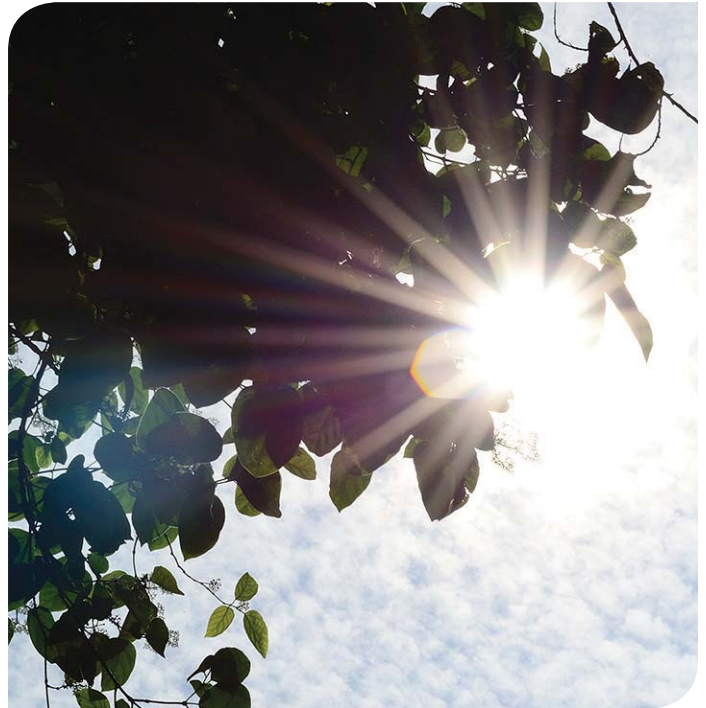
- Increased chance of getting skin cancer
- Increased risk of damaged skin, such as premature wrinkles or brown spots
- Increased number of cold sores
- Increased risk of cataracts, from not protecting your eyes over many years

Certain skin types are affected by the sun more easily than others. People with fair skin or lots of freckles, blond or red hair and blue eyes are likely to sunburn more easily than others. Age also affects the sun's potential for harm: adults older than 60 years old are usually more sensitive to sunlight.

Certain factors can increase the potential for more severe sunburns.

- **Time of day** — If you are outside between the hours of 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. you are at a higher risk. During this time, the sun's rays are the strongest.
- **Location** — Certain places reflect the sun's rays and can increase the risk of sunburn. Reflective surfaces, such as water, white sands, concrete, snow and ice, all have the likelihood of causing more severe burns.
- **Season of the year** — During the summer, the sun is high in the sky and can cause more severe sunburn.
- **Altitude** — At a higher altitude there is a higher risk of sunburn. There is not as much of the earth's atmosphere blocking out the sun's rays.
- **Closeness to the equator** — If you are located near the equator you are exposed to more

Long term concerns for those exposed to the sun include skin cancer, damaged skin, and cataracts.



direct sunlight. Did you know that southern areas of the United States get 1.5 times more sunlight than the northern areas?

- **Last but not least** — Make sure to check the ultraviolet index or the UV Index. This index is a standard measurement of the strength of the ultraviolet radiation from the sun. The UV Index can help people avoid excessive exposure and avoid health risks associated with sun exposure.

Before fall activities start, you may still have plans to be out in the sun and soaking up the last bit of summer. Make sure you take care of your skin. Wear sunscreen and avoid staying out in the sun for long periods of time.

SOURCE:

WebMD. Sunburn – Topic Overview. Sept. 2011. Accessed at <http://www.webmd.com/healthy-beauty/tc/sunburn-topic-overview>

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