

Sunburn and tips for treating it

Sunburn is a form of radiation burn that affects living tissue, such as skin, that results from an overexposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation, commonly from the sun. Common symptoms in humans and other animals include red or reddish skin that is hot to the touch, pain, general fatigue, and mild dizziness. An excess of UV radiation can be life-threatening in extreme cases. Excessive UV radiation is the leading cause of primarily non-malignant skin tumours

Sunburn is an inflammatory response in the skin triggered by direct DNA damage by UV radiation. When the skin cells' DNA is overly damaged by UV radiation, type I cell-death is triggered and the skin is replaced.

Sun protective measures including sunscreen and sun protective clothing is widely accepted to prevent sunburn and some types of skin cancer. Special populations including children are especially susceptible to sunburn and protective measures should be used.

Tips to ease the Burn

1. Apply a burn cream, aloe vera or yogurt to sedate and cool a minor burn. Aloe vera or calamine lotion will also soothe burned skin. Don't use oily creams as they will simply trap heat in and add to the discomfort.
2. Frequent cool baths or showers can alleviate the pain of sunburn. One handy trick: Generously sprinkle baking soda into tepid bathwater. Enjoy the soak. Afterwards, instead of drying yourself with a towel, let the solution dry on your skin. It can help soothe the pain.
3. If it is a significant burn, you feel unwell or the skin swells badly or blisters, seek medical help. Stay out of the sun until all signs of redness have gone.
4. Emollients with menthol are soothing to sunburned skin, some skin experts say. And if a particular area is especially uncomfortable, hydrocortisone cream can help.
5. If it's very painful, painkillers, such as paracetamol or ibuprofen, will ease the pain of sunburn by helping to reduce inflammation.
6. Be sure to apply 25ml of SPF per limb every two hours to maximise protection from sun damage. It's not just the factor on the bottle that counts but the way you apply, the amount and how often that makes all the difference.
7. Fluids can be lost through badly burnt skin, so drink plenty of water.