

## DESCRIPTION

Redness and soreness of the skin that follows excess exposure to the sun or tanning devices.

## FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Sunburn symptoms develop 2 to 4 hours after exposure.
- Fever, nausea, and feeling faint (occasionally).
- Red, swollen, and (sometimes) blistered skin. Pain occurs and is worse in the first 6 to 48 hours.

## PREVENTIVE MEASURES

- Avoid the sun from noon to 3 PM. Sunburn can occur even on cloudy days. Ultraviolet light is not blocked by thin clouds on overcast days. It is partially screened by smoke and smog. A great deal of ultraviolet light reflects from snow, water, sand, and sidewalks.
- Use sunblock daily. Products with a sun-protective value of 15 or more protect almost totally. Some of these resist water and perspiration. Reapply them every 2 hours or after swimming. Baby oil, mineral oil, or cocoa butter offer no protection from the sun.
- For the best protection, use a physical barrier agent such as zinc-oxide ointment. Reapply after swimming and at frequent intervals during exposure. Barrier agents are helpful on skin areas that are more likely to burn. These include the nose, ears, backs of the legs, and back of the neck.
- Wear clothing that covers your whole body. Protect your face with a wide-brimmed hat. Wear sunglasses.
- If you feel you must get a tan, do it very gradually.

## EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Recovery in 3 days to 3 weeks. Tanning or peeling of the skin usually occurs, depending on how severe the burn was.

## POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

- Blisters may become infected.
- Years of over-exposure to the sun can lead to wrinkled, saggy and leathery skin. The risk of skin cancer is greatly increased.

## GENERAL MEASURES

- To reduce heat and pain, dip gauze or towels in cool water and lay these on the burned areas. Take cool showers.
- Soak in a tub of cool water to which an oatmeal product (Aveeno) or baking soda has been added. Pat skin dry, do not rub.
- Use a moisturizer or an aloe product to keep the skin from feeling dry.

## MEDICATIONS

- Ask your health care provider about using nonprescription burn remedies that contain local anesthetics such as benzocaine or lidocaine. They can produce allergic reactions in some persons.
- Medications for pain may be prescribed.
- Oral steroids may also be prescribed to reduce inflammation.
  - You should begin your steroid prescription today.
  - You should begin your steroid prescription tomorrow.

Your doctor also recommends the following over-the-counter medications. These medications may offer significant symptom relief:

- For fever or pain use acetaminophen or ibuprofen.  
(Acetaminophen and ibuprofen may also be alternated every 3 hours for persistent fever or pain.)
- Antihistamine

- Unless your doctor tells you differently, always finish the full course of your steroid prescription, even if you start to feel better.
- Steroids may interfere with the effectiveness of birth control pills. Use an alternative method of contraception for the remainder of the month after finishing your antibiotic and/or steroid prescription.

## SEEK MEDICAL ATTENTION IF

- You develop other symptoms such as nausea, vomiting, or swelling.
- You develop a fever or any signs of infection.