



RAYMOND W. BLISS ARMY HEALTH CENTER

SUN FACTS

The sun's ultraviolet (UV) radiation can cause damage to our skin and eyes – even when it's cloudy or overcast. Short-term results of sun burn causes skin redness, tenderness, pain, and can cause swelling and blistering. Symptoms of more serious sunburn include fever, chills, upset stomach, and confusion. If these symptoms develop, see a doctor. Long-term effects are more serious. Long-term exposure can also cause premature changes in the skin including:

- Aging
- Wrinkles
- Loss of elasticity
- Dark patches
- Actinic keratoses (rough or scaly patches)

UV exposure that is intense enough to cause sunburn increases a person's risk of developing skin cancer. Cancer of the skin is the most common of all cancers. The American Cancer Society estimates that in 2004 there will be 55,100 new cases of melanoma in this country. The sun's UV radiation also increases the risk of cataracts and certain other eye problems, and can suppress the immune system.

Are any UV rays safe?

No, there are no safe UV rays. Two main types of UV radiation reach the earth, UVA and UVB. Both contribute to skin damage, including skin cancer. Artificial sources of UV light, such as sunlamps and tanning booths, may increase risk of developing skin cancer.

What is the UV index?

UV index was developed by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the National Weather Service to remind people to take precautions against the potential damage of UV exposure. The UV Index number, ranging from 0 to 10+, indicates the amount of UV radiation reaching the earth's surface during an hour around noon. A higher number means greater exposure to UV radiation. Please go to the following web address to get the UV index for your area. <http://www.epa.gov/sunwise/uvindex.html>

How can I protect myself against sun damage and sunburn?

- Use a broad-spectrum sunscreen with an SPF (sun protection factor) of at least 15 on all exposed skin, including the lips, even on cloudy days.
- If exposed to water, either swimming or sweating, use a water-resistant sunscreen. There are some new higher SPF "sports" sunscreens that stay on well and are water resistant.
- Reapply frequently, at least every 1 ½ hours.
- Wear a hat and gloves
- Seek shade when possible
- Wear protective, tightly woven clothing
- Avoid peak sunlight hours, try to go outdoors early or late in the day
- The greatest sun damage occurs between 10am and 4pm

If you have questions concerning sun safety or need health information on other health related topics please call the Health Education Resource Center at 533-5668.

