Sunburn

Sunburn is caused by overexposure to ultraviolet light. Sun exposure can start to injure within 30 minutes. Skin will become red in 2 to 4 hours with peak effects in 12 to 24 hours. Skin loss or peeling usually occurs in 4 to 7 days after sun exposure. Severe sunburns, with blistering of the skin, may cause you to feel feverish and ill for 2 to 3 days. Sunburn may cause skin cancer and an acceleration in the aging process. Individuals with light skin or a fair complexion may be more susceptible to sunburn.

Sunburn treatment includes:

- Avoiding further exposure to the sun.
- Keeping the sunburned area cool. Cool baths and cool compresses may be helpful, if used several times per day. Do not apply ice, since this may result in frostbite.
- Taking only over-the-counter or prescription medicines for pain, discomfort or fever as directed by your caregiver.
- Using aloe or other over-the-counter sunburn aftercare preparations may offer some relief. Putting on a moisturizing cream a couple times per day will help keep the skin moist. Do not use on blisters.
- Using hydrocortisone cream or spray 3 to 4 times per day and taking anti-inflammatory medications by mouth may help cut down on itching and swelling (*inflammation*).
- Drinking enough water and fluids to keep the urine clear or pale yellow.

If blisters break; thoroughly, but gently, wash the area twice daily with soap and water. Cover with a clean gauze to prevent infection. Your caregiver may prescribe a cream to discourage infection.

Sunburn prevention is the most important aspect regarding sunburn. Primary prevention is to avoid excessive sun exposure. Cover skin with clothing. Use a sunscreen or sunblock with SPF 30 or greater regularly. Avoid tanning beds.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You or your child has an oral temperature above 102° F (38.9° C), not controlled by medicine.
- Pain is uncontrolled with medications.
- You or your child develops vomiting or diarrhea.
- You or your child feels faint or develops a headache with confusion.
- You or your child develops severe blistering.
- There is a pus-like (*purulent*) discharge.
- The sunburn becomes more painful and swollen.

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