

Summer Special NEWSLETTER

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PRODUCED BY THE PATIENT PARTICIPATION GROUP FOR SALTSCAR SURGERY

Is it safe to get a suntan? 7 Frequently asked questions

Dr Julie Sharp of Cancer Research UK has answered seven important questions about the effect of sun on your skin and the importance of sunscreen.



1. How long can sunburn last?

You can get sunburnt in just 10 minutes, even in the UK. If you overdo it at a festival or on holiday, skin can be red, painful and peeling for a week or more.

2. What suncream should I use?

Use factor 30 plus with UVA and UVB protection. This means the sunscreen protects against both UVA and UVB rays, which can cause sunburn, premature aging, and skin cancer.

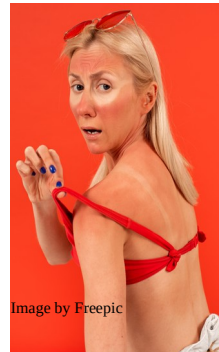
Apply regularly (every two to three hours) and after swimming. The paler your skin is, the more care you need to take. If you have moles or freckles, you have a higher risk of skin cancer and need to take extra care. Also remember to use suncream 15 to 30 minutes before going out in the sun.

3. I have darker skin. Is sun exposure still dangerous?

While darker skin provides some natural protection against the sun's harmful UV rays due to higher melanin levels, it's not enough to fully protect against sun damage, sunburn, or skin cancer. A high SPF sunscreen, along with other sun-safe practices, is recommended for all skin tones



4. Sun makes me feel good. What's so bad about it anyway?



Right now the worst thing about it might seem like sunburn and strap marks, but in a few years you could have wrinkles, moles, freckles, brown patches and, sometimes, skin cancer (melanoma)

In 2022, melanoma was the 17th most common cancer globally, with an estimated 331,722 new cases and . In the UK, more than 2,000 people die from malignant melanoma every year

In the UK, approx 320 people are diagnosed with melanoma skin cancer every week. This is based on an average of around 16,700 new cases diagnosed each year. This makes melanoma the fifth most common cancer in the UK, accounting for about 5% of all new cancer cases, according to Cancer Research UK

5. Is sunbathing really worse when you're a teenager?

Yes, younger skin is more easily damaged than older skin. And you can't undo the damage. Once you've been sunburnt your skin will age prematurely.

6. I'm still not persuaded. Is there anything else I should know?

The most common kind of skin cancer is rarely fatal. But it can be seriously disfiguring. If skin cancer is found on the face, it has to be cut out and may even need plastic surgery. There is a risk of permanent scarring,



7. Are sunbeds safer?

Sunbeds emit ultraviolet radiation, which can cause tanning and sunburn. There is no evidence to suggest any type of sunbed is less harmful than natural sun exposure. The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) and the World Health Organization (WHO) discourages the use of sunbeds for cosmetic tanning.

It's illegal for under-18s to use sunbeds.

Sunbeds (Regulation) Act

For appointments and repeat prescriptions, visit: www.saltscarsurgery.nhs.uk

What you need to know about medicines and medical devices during the summer months



The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has issued updated guidance on medicines and medical devices during holiday season

1. Store medicines below 25°C

- Avoid leaving medicines in direct sun, hot cars, travel bags, or on sunny windowsills – temperatures can easily exceed safe storage limits and degrade tablets, inhalers, insulin, EpiPens and more.
- If you spot changes in smell, colour, texture, or performance of your medicines, consult a pharmacist.
- While travelling, keep your medicines in a cool bag or stay in temperature-controlled environments.

2. Check your medicines and devices in the heat

- Even well-sealed medical devices – like blood glucose monitors – can misread if exposed to excessive heat or humidity.
- Stay cool, keep devices dry, and run periodic control checks.
- Be alert during heatwaves: some medicines can worsen dehydration or impair temperature regulation, including diuretics, blood pressure drugs, diabetes treatments, antipsychotics, and stimulants.



3. Prioritise hydration and heat awareness



- Heatstroke and dehydration can happen fast. Watch for dizziness, confusion, headaches or dark urine, especially if you're on medication that affects fluid balance, such as a diuretic.
- Drink water regularly, find shade or cool spaces, and avoid peak sun.

4. Be sun-smart with sun-sensitising medicines

- Several medicines – such as methotrexate, certain antibiotics, diuretics, antidepressants, acne or eczema treatments, and even painkillers like ibuprofen – can increase sun sensitivity, leading to severe sunburn and blistering.
- Use a high-SPF sunscreen, wear protective clothing, and avoid midday sun (11 am – 3 pm).

5. Hay fever alert – stay informed

- Avoid unlicensed treatments like Kenalog hay fever injections, which are licensed as a medicine for other conditions, but not for the treatment of hay fever. The benefits of using it to treat people with hay fever have not been shown to outweigh the risks.

6. Be aware of implanted medical devices when travelling

- **For those with implants (e.g. pacemakers), carry your implant ID card at airport security. Most body scanners are safe, but be aware of hand-held wands and device-specific device advice.**

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