

Message from the Parish Nurses

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PROTECTING YOURSELF FROM SUN EXPOSURE

Many of us love the warm summer months when we can get outdoors and enjoy the beautiful weather. Like many other things, too much sunshine can cause painful sunburns, skin damage, skin aging, and can cause skin cancer. Learn how to prevent these problems and treat them when they occur. The sun is not all negative, it has many positive effects for your overall health when enjoyed in moderation.

SUNBURN

Sunburn should be prevented because it damages the skin. Skin cancer is the most common form of cancer in the USA. Types of skin cancer include basal cell carcinoma, squamous cell carcinoma and melanoma.

SYMPTOMS OF SUNBURN

Symptoms of sunburn do not usually appear until about 4 hours after sun exposure, worsen around 24-36 hours, and resolve in 3-5 days.

- Skin becomes red, tender, abnormally warm, swollen skin, and blistering.
- Headaches, fever, nausea, and fatigue.
- Sunburned eyes become red, dry, painful and feel gritty.

TREATMENT

- Avoid repeated sun exposure until the burn has resolved.
- Take aspirin, acetaminophen, or ibuprofen for pain, headache, and fever.
- Drink plenty of water to help replace fluid losses.
- Apply cold compresses on sunburned area or take a cool shower or bath to cool the sunburned skin.
- Apply moisturizing lotion, aloe, or 1% hydrocortisone cream to affected area to provide additional relief.
- Do not use salve, butter or ointment.

If blistering occurs:

- Lightly but a bandage over the area to prevent infection.
- Do not break blisters.
- When the blisters break and skin peels, dried skin may be removed and an antiseptic ointment or hydrocortisone cream may be applied.

Seek medical attention if any of the following occur:

- Severe sunburn covering more than 15% of the body.
- High fever (> than 101 °F).
- Dehydration.
- Extreme Pain that persists for longer than 48 hours.
- Sunburn effects an infant younger than 1 year old.

PREVENTION GUIDELINES

If you use these comprehensive guidelines from <https://www.skincancer.org/prevention/uva-and-uvb>, you can enjoy yourself outdoors while staying protected from UVA and UVB ultraviolet radiation year round.

- Seek the shade, especially between 10AM and 4PM.
- Do Not Burn.
- Avoid tanning and UV tanning booths.
- Cover up with clothing, including a broad-brimmed hat and UV-blocking sunglasses.
- Use a broad spectrum (UVA-UVB) sunscreen with an SPF of 15 or higher every day. For extended outdoor activity, use a water-resistant, broad spectrum (UVA-UVB) sunscreen with an SPF of 30 or higher.
- Apply 1 ounce (2 Tablespoons) of sunscreen to your entire body 30 minutes before going outside. Reapply every 2 hours, or immediately after swimming or excessive sweating.
- Keep newborns out of the sun. Sunscreens should be on babies over the age of 6 months.
- Examine your skin head-to-toe every month.
- See your physician every year for a professional skin exam.

WHAT ARE SUNSCREENS

Sunscreens are products combining several ingredients that help prevent the sun's ultraviolet (UV) radiation from reaching the skin. Two types of ultraviolet radiation, UVA and UVB, damage the skin and increase your risk of skin cancer. Sunscreens vary in their ability to protect against UVA and UVB.

WHAT ARE UVA and UVB?

- Ultraviolet (UV) radiation is part of the electromagnetic (light) that reaches the earth from the sun.
- Ultraviolet A (UVA) is the longer wave UV ray that causes lasting skin damage, skin aging, and can cause skin cancer.
- Ultraviolet B (UVB) is the shorter wave UV ray that causes sunburns, skin damage, and can cause skin cancer.

WHAT IS SPF?

SPF (Sun Protection Factor) is a measure of a sunscreen's ability to prevent UVB from damaging the skin. Here's how it works: If it takes 20 minutes for your unprotected skin to start turning red, using an SPF sunscreen theoretically prevents reddening 15 times longer – about 5 hours.

WHAT DOES BROAD-SPECTRUM MEAN?

Broad-spectrum sunscreens protect the skin from both UVA and UVB rays.

Barbara Mueller, RN, Faith Community Nurse

More information can be found at:

<https://medlineplus.gov/wellnessandlifestyle.html>

In the search box put: Sun Exposure

Visit: StAgnesShepherdstown.org for "Positive Effects of Sunlight." Click on: Parish Health Newsletter

POSITIVE EFFECTS OF SUNLIGHT

The sun if used in moderation does have positive effects on your health if used in small amounts especially early in the day before it's at its brightest. The amount of sunlight depends on your skin tone, age, health history, diet, and where you live. In general 5-15 minutes and up to 30 minutes if you are dark skinned.

- **Enhances Your Mood and Is A Stress Reliever:**

Sunlight helps boost a chemical in your brain called serotonin. Increasing the level of serotonin can give you more energy and help keep you calm, positive and focused. Doctors sometimes treat seasonal affective disorder (SAD) and other types of depression linked to low levels of serotonin with natural or artificial light.

- **Improves Sleep:** Sunlight affects our sleeping patterns.

Our circadian rhythm is a 24-hour cycle based on light and darkness and influences our sleep-wake cycle.

When it's darker, the brain makes more melatonin, a hormone that makes you drowsy. If it's light out, the brain produces less melatonin.

- **Vitamin D:** Sunlight boosts the body's supply of vitamin D which is important for your bones, blood cells, and immune system. It also helps you take in and use certain minerals, like calcium and phosphorus. You don't need to tan or get a sunburn to receive the proper amount of Vitamin D.

<https://mayoclinic.org> In the search box put: Benefits of Sunlight on Health

- **Treatment for Jaundice:** Jaundice is the yellow color seen in the skin of many newborns. It happens when a chemical called bilirubin builds up in the baby's blood. Most babies have mild jaundice that is harmless, but in unusual situations the bilirubin level can get very high and might cause brain damage. Most jaundice requires no treatment. When treatment is necessary, placing your baby under special lights while he or she is undressed will lower the bilirubin level. Depending on your baby's bilirubin level treatment can be done in the hospital or at home. Supplementing breast milk with formula can also help to lower the bilirubin level and prevent the need for phototherapy. Exposing your baby to sunlight through a window might help lower the bilirubin level, but this will only work if your baby is undressed. Newborns should never be put in direct sunlight outdoors because they might get sunburned.

Note: In breastfed babies, it is common for jaundice to last 1 month or occasionally longer. In formula-fed babies, most jaundice goes away by 2 weeks.

<https://www.healthychildren.org> In the search box put: Jaundice in Newborns