

Press Release



13 August 2003

Surviving Summer Sun - get advice from your local pharmacist

With the recent record temperatures and more good weather on the way, you may be tempted to get out and soak up some sun. But how much do you really know about keeping yourself safe and healthy in summer sun? In light of the recent hot weather, pharmacists nationwide have been inundated with requests for advice on sun care and many other minor seasonal ailments, such as bites and stings and prickly heat.

Whilst most of us enjoy the sun and it is a valuable source of vitamin D, it does carry hidden dangers. For example, did you know that skin cancer is on the increase and is now the most common cancer in the UK? So protecting your skin makes real sense!

This summer, regardless of your skin colour, if you're going to be out in the sun, even for a short time, generously apply a sunscreen to all skin that will be exposed. Besides protecting you from over exposure to sunlight, sunscreens help to prevent other problems related to sun exposure, such as ageing skin and pre-cancerous growths. It's important not to skimp on the amount you use - your pharmacist can advise on how much to use to ensure good protection.

Sunscreens are available from your local pharmacy in a variety of forms - creams, milks, lotions, gels and sprays - so there are plenty of options. Sometimes it can be confusing choosing the right product - so if you're uncertain about what to buy, remember that the pharmacist is on hand to offer friendly, expert help and practical "sun-sensible" self-help tips. For example, your pharmacist can tell you more about a product's sun protection factor (SPF). This indicates the UVB protection level and is a guide to the time you can spend in the sun without burning.

You'll find that your pharmacist will be happy to spend that little extra time with you answering any questions and concerns you may have, which can make all the difference towards reducing your sunburn risk - and helping you stay safe in the sun this summer.

To help you cope with the hot weather, follow the Department of Health ten tips to keep cool and avoid heat-related illnesses.

The Department of Health 10 tips for surviving summer sun

Use sunscreen and cover up

If you can't avoid being out in the sun apply sunscreen (factor 15+)

and wear a t-shirt, hat and sunglasses .

Stay in the shade or indoors

The sun is at its most dangerous between 11am and 3pm. Find shade under umbrellas, trees or canopies. It is worth remembering that the temperature is at least a couple of degrees cooler if you are by water.

Increase your fluid intake

The normal recommended daily intake of fluid is 2.5 litres or 8 glasses per day. In extreme heat experts recommend you drink more and include a range of different fluids.

Ventilate your home

Keep windows open all day and all night and use fans where possible. This is particularly important at night, when the body cools down.

Look after the elderly

Older people are more prone to the effects of heat. If you have older relatives or neighbours you can help simply by checking on them and reminding them to drink plenty and often.

Protect children

Keep a close eye on young children, who need plenty of fluids. A good way to check if they are drinking enough is that they are passing urine regularly and that it is not too dark. Babies and the very young must be kept out of the sun.

Avoid excessive physical exertion

If you are taking physical exercise you need to drink half a litre of fluid at least half an hour beforehand and continue to replenish your fluids after exercising.

Know the perils of outdoor eating

Warm summer weather is a perfect breeding ground for bacteria so it is especially important to keep hot foods hot and cold foods cold until you are ready to eat them. When barbecuing always make sure you cook meat until it is piping hot, none of it is pink and all juices run clear.

Be sensible with alcohol

Hot weather speeds up the effects of alcohol and can lead to dehydration so alternate alcoholic drinks with water or fruit juice.

Keep cool at work

The office is often the coolest place to be in a heatwave. Ask your boss for air- conditioning or fans and open windows where possible. Keep windows shaded with blinds and if possible move your working position out of direct sunlight. Have plenty of breaks during the day to get cold drinks and cool down.

These precautionary measures will help increase protection from heat exhaustion and sunstroke as well as food poisoning and skin cancer.

If you need more advice about staying safe in the sun this summer or any aspect of holiday healthcare, ask your pharmacist - you'll be taking good advice!

-ends

Notes to Editors:

The National Pharmaceutical Association (NPA) is the trade association that represents the professional and commercial interests of the owners of around 11,000 community pharmacies in the United Kingdom

For further information contact:

NPA Press Office: 01727 858687 extensions 3227 and 3311