

Shield Your Skin: Sun Safety

Exposure to the sun's ultraviolet (UV) rays can cause sunburn, premature aging, and increase your risk of developing skin cancer. According to the National Cancer Institute, there were an estimated [100,640 new cases](#) of skin melanomas and 8,290 related deaths in 2024.

Sunburn happens when the sun's invisible UV rays damage the skin. Using sunscreen with the right amount of SPF (Sun Protection Factor) can help protect you from the sun. Everyone should use SPF 30 or higher; however, the ingredients in the sunscreen are just as important in determining its effectiveness. Always choose broad-spectrum products to protect the skin from both [UVB \(burning rays\)](#)

and [UVA \(aging rays\)](#). Avoid sunscreen products that contain [oxybenzone](#) and [retinyl palmitate](#), as these ingredients can be harmful to hormone health and increase the chances of developing skin cancer.

When sunburns become severe enough, you can experience sun poisoning. Symptoms of sun poisoning are the same as a typical sunburn, but they're much more serious. Symptoms of sun poisoning include dehydration, skin infection, headache, nausea, vomiting, and fever or chills.

If you are experiencing symptoms of sun poisoning:

- Get out of the sun.
- Take a cool shower and apply cool compresses to the affected areas.
- Stay hydrated. Avoid alcohol and caffeine as they dehydrate the body.
- Apply aloe vera or soothing lotions to help calm and hydrate the skin.
- Take over-the-counter pain relievers to help with pain and inflammation.
- Protect blisters with a clean, loose bandage, and do not pop them.
- Seek medical attention if you develop a high fever, severe pain, confusion, or show signs of dehydration.

According to the American Academy of Dermatology, a recent survey of more than 1,000 U.S. adults found that 67% incorrectly believe that SPF 30 sunscreen offers twice as much protection as SPF 15 sunscreen.

BENEFIT SPOTLIGHT

Urgent Care vs. Standalone ERs

Have you ever found yourself in a situation of not knowing if you should go to an urgent care or an emergency room? While they seem similar, the two differ in several ways. Knowing where to go can help you save time and money.

Standalone ERs should be utilized by those experiencing life-threatening conditions. If you require immediate medical attention, the ER is your best bet. Urgent Cares, on the other hand, are the [middle ground](#) between your primary care physician (PCP) and the emergency room. If the injury or illness is not life-threatening but it can't wait until you can see your PCP, head to an Urgent Care. The following list goes into detail on some factors to consider before choosing where to go.

Standalone ER

Severity: Life-threatening conditions such as chest pain, severe abdominal pain, head injuries, and uncontrolled bleeding

Hours: 24/7

Cost: More expensive due to higher level of care and resources available

Staffing: Board-certified emergency physicians and nurses trained in emergency care

Urgent Care

Severity: Mild conditions like sprains, minor cuts, urinary tract infections, and earaches

Hours: Typically operate during normal business hours with some weekend and evening hours; not 24/7

Cost: Less expensive than ERs; shorter wait times

Staffing: Mainly physician assistants (PAs), nurse practitioners, and *sometimes* physicians



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BONUS ARTICLES: [Going Gluten Free: Celiac Disease 101](#), [Beyond the Battlefield: Understanding Veterans' Health Challenges](#)

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