

Sunscreen Protection

Why use sunscreens?

Sunscreens protect the healed and/or grafted skin from the harmful rays of the sun. Newly healed skin or grafted skin will be more sensitive to sunlight and will sunburn more quickly and severely. Even if your skin does not burn, your skin may pick up color from sun exposure and this may cause your skin to have a permanent darker color change. This sensitivity to the sun will remain for a year or longer.

How to choose a sunscreen:

- Choose a sunscreen that has a SPF (**Sun Protection Factor**) of 30 or greater. If you have fair or sensitive skin or have history of skin cancer, the higher SPF will make a difference.
- The brand name is unimportant. Use a **broad-spectrum** one to protect against UVB and UVA rays. Some possible choices include Coppertone[®], Banana Boat[®], Neutrogena[®], NO-AD[®] or local store brand.
- Apply lotion at least 20 - 30 minutes before exposure. Avoid a spray on sunscreen as they don't protect as well.
- Refer to manufacturer's instructions and always check sunscreen for the expiration date.
- Reapply sunscreen every 2 hours and immediately after swimming or sweating. You may want to use a waterproof sunscreen.
- Sunscreen rubs off when you towel dry.
- Avoid hours of intense sun between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. to avoid damaging UVA rays.
- Discontinue use of any products that cause an allergic reaction and try another product.

Protect your skin from the sun

You can avoid direct sun exposure to skin with a wide-brimmed hat, tightly woven clothing, your pressure garments, umbrellas, etc. These things do not prevent all sun exposure so be sure and wear sunscreen also. Sun exposure happens whenever you are in the sun – walking, going to and from your car, fishing, gardening, or attending a baseball game. Remember, on those overcast days, you can still get sunburn.

Nutrition

Sunlight provides us with some vitamin D. Since you will be decreasing your sun exposure you may want to consider increasing your oral intake of vitamin D-fortified foods or supplements. Common foods that are fortified with vitamin D include cereal, milk, and orange juice, eggs and various fish (salmon, tuna)

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or health care provider if you have questions or concerns. Burn/Plastics Clinic: weekdays 8am – 4pm at (206) 744-5735. You can also call the Discharge Nurse at 206-744-DCRN (3276).

If you are a patient of another service, call that clinic, or their on-call resident at (206) 744-3000 or the Community Care Line consulting nurse at (206)744-2500.