

When we think of sport safety risks, the sun probably does not come to the top of mind. However, sunburns go beyond just being uncomfortable and can increase the chance of both heat illnesses during activity and skin cancer. In order to stay healthy and safe while participating in our summer activities, we need to prevent sunburns and treat them appropriately if they do happen.

Ultraviolet (UV) rays are energy from light that are invisible to the eye but can cause damage to skin including burns and skin cancer. Limiting UV exposure is the best way to prevent sunburns. We can do this in 3 main ways:

- Wearing protective clothing (ex. long sleeves, hats, rash guards) - creating a physical barrier between your skin and UV rays helps prevent damage
- Using sunscreen – In order to prevent enough UV rays, you should use SPF30 and above. Sunscreen should be reapplied every two hours, or every hour if you are swimming or sweating.
- Avoiding directly sunlight during peak times – The sun, including UV rays, is at its strongest from 10am-4pm, so when practices and games are scheduled outside of these hours, participants are at less of a risk. When team schedules can't be controlled, shaded areas for breaks should be provided during peak sun hours.

Sunburns can still occur even when it's overcast and cloudy. Continuing to take these steps to combat UV exposure is important every day, not just when it is noticeably sunny.

Sometimes, despite our best efforts, sunburns may still occur. It is important to treat your sunburn with care so that the skin can heal as quickly as possible. Some things you can do to help a sunburn include:

- Taking a cool shower then adding a small amount of moisturizer after.
- Using moisturizers that contain aloe vera.
- Leaving blisters alone. Intact blisters are better for skin healing.
- Drinking extra water.
- Covering the sunburn when going outside.

If you are experiencing dehydration, have a fever, or notice any open wounds (including blisters) with a sunburn you should consult a medical professional.

Spending time outside, playing our favorite game is one of the best ways to spend a summer day, but we can't forget to protect ourselves by keeping UV exposure to minimum. Remember to consider clothing, SPF, and timing!

For additional reading regarding sun safety:

<https://www.medstarhealth.org/blog/sunburn-treatment>

<https://www.medstarhealth.org/blog/truth-about-sun-safety-sunscreen-tanning-and-skin-cancer>