

DOC #:	EHS-0201	Revision #:	1.1
DOC Type:	Fact Sheet	Implementation Date:	09/01/2019
Page #:	1 of 2	Last Reviewed/Update Date:	01/08/2024
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Fact Sheet: Sunburn

Sunburn is a common ailment caused by exposure to the sun's ultraviolet radiation during outdoor work. In addition to the skin, eyes can also get burned from sun exposure. Sunburn can occur in as little as 15 minutes of unprotected exposure. The symptoms of sunburn may take several hours to develop after exposure.

Symptoms

- Pinkness or redness of skin
- Skin that feels warm or hot to the touch
- Pain, tenderness or itching
- Swelling
- Small fluid-filled blisters

Severe Symptoms

- Headache
- Fever
- Chills
- Fatigue

Eye Symptoms

- Red, dry and painful
- Can feel gritty

Prevention

- Use a broad-spectrum sunscreen with an SPF 30 or higher on all exposed skin. Apply at least 30 minutes before exposure and reapply, as necessary for as long as you are exposed.
- Hats and long-sleeved shirts are recommended for work in the sun.
- UV protective sun glasses.
- Keep in mind you can get a sunburn on a cloudy day.
- Snow and water can reflect ultraviolet radiation and cause sunburn.
- Sunburn can occur more quickly at high altitude, as there is less filtering of the ultraviolet radiation at elevation.

First Aid Treatment

- If you become sunburned, prevent additional exposure.

- Drink extra water, as you may have also become dehydrated.
- Use aloe vera and over-the-counter medication to manage the discomfort.
- If you have blisters, do not pop them. If they rupture, treat with first aid as with any other open wound.
- If you have severe symptoms, signs of infection, or the blistering covers a large area of the body, seek medical treatment.

References and Additional Resources

- CDC National Institute for Occupational Health and Safety: [Sun Exposure-Sunburn](#)
- Adapted from *Sunburn Fact Sheet*, by University of Maryland: Department of Environmental Safety, Sustainability & Risk (<https://essr.umd.edu/about/research-safety/field-research-safety/planning>) with permission.