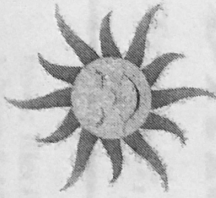
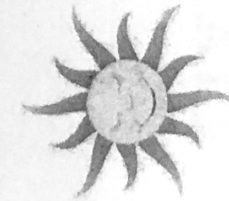


Feel the burn? Protect Yourself



By Allison Williams
STAFF WRITER

Perhaps you or someone you know came home from spring break with something other than memories or souvenirs. Redness, pain, itching and blistering all indicate one common mistake: You forgot to wear sunscreen.

Sunburns occur from excessive exposure to natural or artificial sunlight. Aside from the obvious discomfort associated with sunburns, there are many lesser-known mild to severe consequences. Although the damage caused by sun exposure is irreversible, it is always important to properly treat any sunburn to maintain healthy skin.

According to WebMD.com, there are various factors one should be aware of that may increase the chances of sunburn. Traveling to areas located closer to the equator or at higher altitudes may make uninformed tourists more apt to get sunburned. In addition, certain medications can make the skin more sensitive to ultraviolet rays.

Some people with fair skin and light hair may also be at greater risk of sunburn. It is important to know, however, that darker-skinned people have a risk of skin damage from sun exposure, as well.

The short-term consequences of sunburn are pain and discomfort, skin redness and irritation, inflammation and dehydration. Skin cancer is the most serious long-term effect of sunburn and can occur as a

Brockport Student Health Center said it comes as a surprise to students that one severe burn can have such serious consequences.

"The smallest amount of sun can change the chemicals in your skin," Maier said. "Changes in the cells can lead to a potential for skin cancer."

An even more common result of sun exposure is premature aging of the skin. According to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Center for Devices and Radiological Health, premature aging results in "leathery, wrinkled skin and dark spots." This occurs when the collagen and elastin fibers in healthy skin are broken down by ultraviolet rays.

Prevention is the key to avoiding the long-term effects of skin damage. According to the FDA, the best way to shield your skin from the dangerous effects of UV radiation is to incorporate sun protection into your daily routine.

The FDA suggests avoiding outdoor activities between the hours of 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. This reduces exposure to the sun's strongest rays. If outdoor activities are planned, sunscreen should always be applied and reapplied every couple of hours.

that provide UVA and UVB protection should be worn.

When prevention fails, it is necessary to treat the symptoms in the incident of sunburn. Maier said cool clothes can be applied to mild burns to ease the irritation. Cool baths may also help relieve the discomfort of sunburn. Pain may be treated with over-the-counter medications such as Tylenol or ibuprofen. Drinking fluids is essential to rehydrate the body and skin. Lotions containing aloe may also be applied to the burn to prevent peeling. If blistering occurs, wear loose-fitting clothing, avoid friction and do not puncture the blister.

"The long-term effects are pretty well documented. Everybody should be putting on sunscreen."

— Lynne Maier, RN at the Brockport Student Health Center

Severe sunburns may require more medical attention and additional treatment. A doctor should be seen if a burn includes open blisters, excessive redness, puffiness or if a fever is present.

Maier had one final message for students regarding sun exposure: Protect yourselves.

"The long-term effects are pretty well documented," she said. "Everybody should be putting sunscreen on."

More information about sunburn treatment and skin care can be found by seeing

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