

## Sunburn Fact Sheet

Sunburn is a common ailment caused by exposure to the sun's ultraviolet radiation during outdoor work. 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

### 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. Use reef-safe mineral sunscreens if working in marine environments.
- Hats and long-sleeved shirts are recommended for work in the sun.
- 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.
- Eyes can also get sunburned from overexposure to ultraviolet rays causing inflammation of the cornea. Sunglasses, goggles or other eye coverings that block or absorb ultraviolet rays can help protect your eyes.

### 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 eyes are affected, remove contact lenses and resist the urge to rub your eyes.

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- 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](#)

*Illness, injury and close call events shall be reported by submitting an [SU-17](#).*

If you have questions or need support, contact EH&S's Field Safety Program at [ehs\\_field\\_safety\\_support@lists.stanford.edu](mailto:ehs_field_safety_support@lists.stanford.edu).

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