

Summer Health Factsheet



Summer Health

Sun safety

Rates of skin cancer are increasing faster than any other cancer in the UK, with figures doubling every 10-20 years. Around 90% of all skin cancers are caused by over-exposure to ultraviolet radiation (UVR) making the disease almost entirely preventable.

Be sun-savvy, follow these five steps:



Slip on a t shirt



Slop on SPF 30+ broad spectrum UVA sunscreen



Slap on a broad brimmed hat



Slide on quality sunglasses



Shade from the sun whenever possible

Sunburn

Always apply sunscreen before going outdoors. In the event you do get a sunburn, you will find your skin is red, sore and warm to the touch and often itchy. It's important to look after it and make sure the skin doesn't become more damaged by avoiding the sun where possible.

Cool the skin by using a cold compress or taking a cool bath or shower. And stay hydrated by drinking plenty of fluids. Although sunburn usually heals on its own in a few days, if it's particularly severe or combined with other symptoms, it's important to see a doctor.

Quick tips to relieve sunburn discomfort

- Wear loose-fitting clothing to prevent rubbing
- Make sure to cover any red, dry or sore skin if you go back into the sun
- Avoid using any soaps or shower gels on the affected areas until they've healed
- Drink a lot of water
- Apply After Sun to damaged skin but don't rely on its cooling effect to stop damage

Sun damage prevention and early detection saves lives!

Summer Health

Heat exhaustion and heatstroke

Heat exhaustion is not usually serious if you cool down within 30 minutes. If it turns into heatstroke, it needs to be treated as an emergency.

Symptoms of heat exhaustion

- A headache
- Dizziness and confusion
- Loss of appetite and feeling sick
- Excessive sweating and pale, clammy skin
- Cramps in the arms, legs and stomach
- Fast breathing or pulse
- A high temperature of 38C or above
- Being very thirsty
- Feeling unwell after 30 minutes of resting in a cool place and drinking plenty of water

Symptoms of heat stroke

- Not sweating even while feeling too hot
- Fast breathing or shortness of breath
- Feeling confused
- A high temperature of 40C or above
- A fit (seizure)
- Loss of consciousness
- Not responsive

Heatstroke can be very serious if not treated quickly. Call the emergency services. Put the person in the recovery position if they lose consciousness while you're waiting for help.

Heatstroke can happen from exposure to a hot environment for a prolonged period, or through strenuous activity in hot weather.

It can be brought on by:

- Wearing excess clothing that prevents sweat from evaporating easily
- Drinking alcohol, which can affect your body's ability to regulate your temperature
- Not drinking enough water to replenish fluids lost through sweating

Heatstroke is predictable and preventable

- Wear loose, lightweight clothing
- Protect against sunburn
- Drink plenty of fluids
- Never leave anyone (or animal) in a parked car
- Take it easy during the hottest part of the day
- Be cautious if you're at increased risk. For example, if you take certain medications or take part in strenuous sporting events

If someone is showing signs of heat exhaustion, they need to be cooled down.

Summer Health

Hay fever

Hay fever is very common, affecting nearly 18 million people in the UK. Though it may sound trivial, hay fever symptoms can significantly affect your quality of life.

It's usually worse between late March and September, especially when it's warm, humid and windy. This is when the pollen count is at its highest.

Symptoms of a pollen allergic reaction

Allergic reactions usually happen quickly within a few minutes of exposure to an allergen.

They can cause:

- Sneezing
- A runny or blocked nose
- Red, itchy, watery eyes
- Wheezing and coughing
- Loss of smell
- Headache
- Earache
- Fatigue
- A red, itchy rash
- Worsening of asthma or eczema symptoms

There's currently no cure for hay fever and you can't prevent it, but you can do things to ease your symptoms when the pollen count is high.

Do

- Put Vaseline around your nostrils to trap pollen
- Wear wraparound sunglasses to stop pollen getting into your eyes
- Shower and change your clothes after you've been outside to wash pollen off
- Stay indoors whenever possible
- Keep windows and doors shut as much as possible
- Vacuum regularly and dust with a damp cloth

Don't:

- Don't cut grass or walk on grass
- Don't spend too much time outside
- Don't keep fresh flowers in the house
- Don't smoke or be around smoke, it'll make symptoms worse
- Don't dry clothes outside, they can catch pollen
- Don't let pets into the house if possible, they can carry pollen indoors

Summer Health

Vision care

Eye injuries and problems can happen at any time of year. But the summer season, with bright sun and outdoor activities can have many risks and challenges such as sand blowing in your eyes scratching your cornea. It's important to protect your eyes.

- Choose a good pair of sunglasses to greatly reduce the amount of sunlight glare, meaning less squinting and less eye pain. Sunglasses can also prevent headaches, migraines and blurry vision.
- Wear a hat. A sun hat with a 3-inch wide brim is best, as it provides a good amount of additional protection.
- Seek the shade. In addition to a hat, staying out of direct sun exposure (for example, by sitting under a tree or beach umbrella) gives you an extra bit of protection.
- Wear goggles when you swim. Eyes can be aggravated or damaged by water.
- Take out your contacts before going in water. If you can't swim safely without them, consider watertight prescription goggles.
- Wash your hands regularly and avoid rubbing your eyes.

What to look for when buying sunglasses:

- Focus on bigger models that can protect peripheral vision.
- Sunglasses that offer 100 per cent protection against UV rays
- The colour of lenses can help with certain hobbies. Green, grey or amber are great for sports and block out blue light.
- Darker lenses are best for everyday use.



Summer Health

Summer food safety

Picnics, barbecues and eating outdoors are just some of the perks of warmer weather. But these activities also increase the risk of food poisoning.

Bacteria like E. coli and Salmonella grow between 5C and 60C and they multiply most rapidly at the warmer end of this temperature range. These bacteria can cause food poisoning, a broad term for illnesses caused by consuming spoiled food or drink.

The symptoms of food poisoning can vary, but most people find that they feel sick, vomit, have stomach cramps or get diarrhoea. You can also suffer from a high fever and aching muscles or chills.

Reduce the risk of food poisoning

- Prepare meat or seafood carefully before cooking. You should also make sure they're cooked properly and keep raw meat, fish and seafood away from other food being served.
- Leftover food can spoil if left out for too long. Make sure you refrigerate foods that go off quickly, like cooked meats and potato or pasta salads, within 90 minutes. You should also eat or throw away any leftovers in the fridge within two days.
- Wash fruit and vegetables before you eat them. Salads and other picnic-friendly foods often contain raw fruit and vegetables that can carry dangerous germs.
- Raw meat, seafood, eggs and dairy can spread germs to the rest of your food if you don't take steps to keep them separate.
- Wash your hands and keep surfaces clean. Make sure you wash your utensils, cutting boards and worktops with hot, soapy water whenever you're preparing food.



Summer Health

Summer bug bites

Being outside more during the summer months means extra exposure to bugs and insects and a higher risk of bites and stings. These can often cause a small lump on the skin that can be painful and itchy.

Most bites will clear up on their own within a few hours or days, and can be safely treated at home with an over-the-counter cream or spray to relieve discomfort.

Most treatments for bites and stings are similar, but if you weren't sure what caused a sting, these are the most common:



Wasp or hornet

Sharp, sudden pain at first, followed by a swollen red mark.



Bee

Similar to a wasp sting, but the sting is often left in the wound.



Mosquito

Small red itchy lumps, which can sometimes be fluid-filled blisters



Tick

Not usually painful. Can cause swelling, itchiness, swelling and bruising.



Horsefly

Very painful. The area will be red and raised. Can sometimes cause dizziness.



Midge

Very similar to mosquito bites.



Bedbug

Not usually painful. Often in straight lines on the face, neck, hands or arms.



Mite

Bites usually appear on uncovered skin causing very itchy red lumps.



Flea

Small itchy red lumps, sometimes grouped in clusters. Blisters may also develop.



Spider

Bites from spiders in the UK are uncommon. A small puncture mark on the skin, which can be painful and cause redness and swelling.



Ant

You may feel a nip and a pale pink mark on your skin. Sometimes can be painful, itchy and swollen.

Summer Health

Summer bug bites

What to do if you've been bitten or stung:

- Remove the sting/ tick if it's still in the skin
- Wash the affected area with soap and water
- Apply cold compress or an ice pack for at least 10 minutes
- Raise or elevate the affected area to reduce the swelling
- Avoid scratching the area to reduce risk of infection

See a pharmacist if no improvements they can offer painkillers, creams for itching and antihistamines or contact your GP or NHS 111 if you are worried?



Summer Health

Managing a chronic illness in the summer

It can be harder to stay well in hot weather with certain health conditions. It can worsen fatigue, make you feel dizzy, nauseous and even cause skin rashes that are hard to manage.

The two main recommendations to stay well are:

- Avoid activities in extreme heat when possible
- Dress appropriately for the summer to promote cooling

If avoiding the heat isn't an option, there are things that can reduce the likelihood of a heat related illness:

- Find an escape from the heat. If you're out, use places such as public libraries and shopping malls
- Keep your home cool. Cover windows, use window reflectors, use attic fans and install window air conditioners
- Avoid high-energy activities
- Wear loose, light clothing
- Drink plenty of fluids

Some medicines can increase sensitivity to sunlight, which means that the skin will burn more easily than you might expect. If you're unsure whether your medication is likely to increase your risk of sun damage, read the guidelines included in the packet.

If you're worried about managing your long-term condition, contact NHS 111 for guidance and advice.



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