SKIN_CARE

How to Heal and Prevent Sunburn: Aftercare Tips for Your Skin

Cheng Huang*

* *Correspondence: Cheng Huang*

Received: 13 March 2021 **Published:** 23 March 2021 **Volume 8, Issue 1** (Jan–Mar 2021)
Article no.: e42 **Open access** · free to read

Sunburn is a common skin condition that occurs when the skin is overexposed to ultraviolet (UV) rays from the sun. While it may seem like a minor inconvenience, sunburn can lead to serious skin damage, premature aging, and an increased risk of skin cancer. This article provides a comprehensive guide on how to heal and prevent sunburn, including aftercare tips to ensure your skin remains healthy and protected.

Understanding Sunburn

Sunburn is the result of skin cells being damaged by UV radiation. There are two types of UV rays that can harm your skin: UVA and UVB. UVA rays penetrate deep into the skin and contribute to premature aging and skin cancer, while UVB rays are responsible for causing sunburn. The severity of sunburn can vary from mild redness and discomfort to severe blistering and peeling.

Immediate Steps to Take After Getting Sunburned

1. Get Out of the Sun

The first and most crucial step is to remove yourself from direct sunlight to prevent further damage. Seek shade or go indoors as soon as you notice signs of sunburn.

2. Cool the Skin

Cooling the skin can help reduce inflammation and provide relief from pain. Take a cool (not cold) shower or bath, or apply a cool, damp cloth to the affected areas. Avoid using ice directly on the skin, as this can cause further damage.

3. Hydrate

Sunburn can lead to dehydration, so it's essential to drink plenty of water to help your body recover. Hydrating from the inside out can also help your skin heal more quickly.

4. Moisturize

After cooling the skin, apply a gentle, fragrance-free moisturizer to help soothe and hydrate the affected areas. Aloe vera gel is a popular choice for sunburn relief due to its cooling and anti-inflammatory properties.

5. Avoid Further Irritation

Wear loose, soft clothing to avoid irritating the sunburned skin. Avoid using harsh soaps, exfoliants, or products containing alcohol, as these can further dry out and irritate the skin.

Home Remedies for Sunburn Relief

1. Aloe Vera

Aloe vera is known for its soothing and healing properties. Apply pure aloe vera gel directly to the sunburned skin to reduce redness and inflammation.

2. Oatmeal Baths

Oatmeal has anti-inflammatory properties that can help soothe sunburned skin. Add a cup of colloidal oatmeal to a cool bath and soak for 15-20 minutes.

3. Coconut Oil

Coconut oil can help moisturize and soothe sunburned skin. Apply a thin layer of coconut oil to the affected areas after cooling the skin.

4. Honey

Honey has natural antibacterial and anti-inflammatory properties. Apply a thin layer of honey to the sunburned skin and leave it on for 15-20 minutes before rinsing off with cool water.

5. Green Tea

Green tea contains antioxidants that can help reduce inflammation. Brew a pot of green tea, let it cool, and apply it to the sunburned skin using a clean cloth.

Over-the-Counter Treatments

1. Hydrocortisone Cream

Hydrocortisone cream can help reduce itching and inflammation. Apply a thin layer to the affected areas as directed on the packaging.

2. Pain Relievers

Over-the-counter pain relievers such as ibuprofen or acetaminophen can help reduce pain and inflammation associated with sunburn.

3. Antihistamines

Oral antihistamines can help reduce itching and discomfort caused by sunburn.

When to See a Doctor

While most sunburns can be treated at home, there are certain situations where you should seek medical attention:

- Severe sunburn with blistering and swelling
- Signs of infection, such as increased redness, pus, or fever
- Sunburn that covers a large area of the body
- Persistent pain or discomfort
- Dehydration symptoms, such as dizziness, dry mouth, or reduced urine output

Preventing Sunburn

1. Use Sunscreen

Applying sunscreen is one of the most effective ways to prevent sunburn. Choose a broad-spectrum sunscreen with an SPF of at least 30, and apply it generously to all exposed skin. Reapply every two hours, or more often if swimming or sweating.

2. Wear Protective Clothing

Wearing protective clothing, such as long-sleeved shirts, wide-brimmed hats, and sunglasses, can help shield your skin from harmful UV rays.

3. Seek Shade

Whenever possible, seek shade, especially during peak sun hours (10 a.m. to 4 p.m.). Use umbrellas, trees, or other forms of shade to protect your skin.

4. Avoid Tanning Beds

Tanning beds emit UV radiation that can cause skin damage and increase the risk of skin cancer. Avoid using tanning beds and opt for safer alternatives, such as self-tanning products.

5. Be Mindful of Reflective Surfaces

Water, sand, and snow can reflect UV rays and increase your risk of sunburn. Take extra precautions when spending time near these surfaces.

Long-Term Skin Care After Sunburn

1. Continue Moisturizing

Even after the sunburn has healed, continue to moisturize your skin to keep it hydrated and healthy. Look for products that contain ingredients like hyaluronic acid, glycerin, and ceramides.

2. Exfoliate Gently

Once your skin has fully healed, gently exfoliate to remove dead skin cells and promote skin renewal. Use a mild exfoliant and avoid scrubbing too harshly.

3. Monitor Your Skin

Keep an eye on your skin for any changes, such as new moles, growths, or changes in existing moles. If you notice anything unusual, consult a dermatologist.

4. Stay Hydrated

Continue to drink plenty of water to keep your skin hydrated from the inside out. Proper hydration is essential for maintaining healthy skin.

5. Protect Your Skin

Make sun protection a daily habit, even on cloudy days or during the winter months. Consistent sun protection can help prevent future sunburns and reduce the risk of skin damage.

Conclusion

Sunburn can be painful and damaging to your skin, but with the right aftercare and preventive measures, you can heal and protect your skin effectively. By following the tips outlined in this article, you can ensure that your skin remains healthy and resilient against the harmful effects of UV radiation. Remember, prevention is always better than cure, so make sun protection a priority in your daily skincare routine.

Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

How to cite this article (Vancouver)
Huang C. How to Heal and Prevent Sunburn: Aftercare Tips for Your Skin. CHEARS Chronical. 2021;8(1):e42. Available from: https://chears.in/journal/volume-8/issue-1/how-to-heal-and-prevent-sunburn-aftercare-tips-for-your-skin-42
Published in CHEARS Chronical.
https://chears.in/journal/volume-8/issue-1/how-to-heal-and-prevent-sunburn-aftercare-tips-for-your-skin-42