

## Protect yourself this Sun Awareness Week



With the hottest weekend so far this year still sizzling in our memory, it's only fitting that this week is Sun Awareness Week. Designed to highlight the dangers of unprotected sun exposure, the week runs from 9<sup>th</sup> – 15 May this year. To help you stay safe in the sun, the sun experts at Piz Buin have created this guide to protecting skin when summer hits.

It's widely known that sun exposure is inherently bad for us and our skin, however according to the British Association of Dermatologists, [80% of people fail to apply sun cream before going out in the sun and then shortly afterwards](#). This doubling up on application is widely recommended by medical professionals. It helps to make sure that the product is fully absorbed into the skin before exposure to sun, reduces the chances of areas of skin being missed and ensures that a thick enough layer is applied. The average adult needs around six full teaspoons of sun cream to protect their body – most people use only half that so apply twice to be sure you're covered up<sup>1</sup>.

The sun's UVA and UVB rays are particularly harmful to skin and can damage it beyond repair. If you've ever felt the unpleasant tingling of scorched skin on holiday or the red, tight and blistered patches after a day at the beach, you'll know exactly what we mean! Slathering on sun cream is one of the best ways to protect against harmful rays and prevent sunburn.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.bad.org.uk/for-the-public/skin-cancer/sunscreen-fact-sheet#applying-sunscreen>

## **What exactly are UVA and UVB rays, and how do they affect us?**

Sunshine is made up of three different bands of Ultraviolet Rays; UVA, UVB and UVC<sup>2</sup>. UVA rays are long-wave rays, whereas UVB rays are short-wave rays. Both types of rays penetrate the atmosphere and play an important role in providing the earth with vital energy, however they are both extremely harmful to unprotected skin. With wavelengths shorter than visible light, they are invisible to the naked eye which makes them extremely hard to keep track of. UVC rays don't penetrate the earth's atmosphere, so they don't play a part in skin damage.

UVA rays cause long-term skin damage, such as skin cancer, premature skin aging and sun spots, and can even cause serious eye damage. UVB rays however are the main cause of sunburn, which burns the superficial layers of the skin causing blistering, nausea and dehydration<sup>3</sup>.

With varying intensities depending on the time of year, time of day and weather conditions, approximately 10 times more UVA rays reach the earth's surface than UVB rays<sup>4</sup>. The effects of the sun begin as soon as skin is exposed - if it's not protected, they can last for the rest of our lives.

### **Immediate effects**

Caused by UVA and visible light, the first colour-related effect of sun exposure is known as "immediate pigmentation" and can disappear within two hours<sup>5</sup>.

Persistent pigment darkening (PPD) appears during exposure and remains for up to several days<sup>6</sup>. Neither of these protect against sunburn.

### **Delayed effects**

High doses of UV rays penetrate the layers of the skin causing blood vessels below the skin's surface to expand and leak fluids. This causes the inflammation and redness you experience after too long in the sun without sun cream. Sunburn will usually appear within 2-6 hours of exposure and will reach its maximum intensity within 24-36 hours. It should disappear after 3-5 very uncomfortable days<sup>7</sup>.

Tanning of the skin usually starts within 3-5 days after sun exposure. It is caused by skin cells called melanocytes synthesising the melanin

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.skincancer.org/prevention/uva-and-uvb>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.skincancer.org/prevention/uva-and-uvb>

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.pizbuin.com/uk/know\\_the\\_sun/](https://www.pizbuin.com/uk/know_the_sun/)

<sup>5</sup> [https://www.pizbuin.com/uk/know\\_the\\_sun/](https://www.pizbuin.com/uk/know_the_sun/)

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3427189/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.skinhealthuk.com/images/content/IH-000320-AW-2-MySkinHealth.pdf>

in the skin – melanin is the skin's natural tanning pigment and what transforms you from winter white to bronzed or red. The melanin is transferred to neighbouring cells called keratinocytes, which are the main cell type in the upper layer of your skin (epidermis), giving the tanned effect<sup>8</sup>.

### **Long term effects**

Sun exposure plays a major role in the skin's ageing process. In fact, up to 90% of all visible signs of ageing can be attributed to the harmful effects of sun exposure<sup>9</sup>. So ladies – a beautiful bronze glow may look fab now, but if you don't protect your skin, it can lead to dark patches, fine lines and wrinkles further down the line.

The most serious side effects of all are skin cancer and malignant melanoma. They are caused by damage to the DNA structure of skin cells exposed to the sun. Damage to these skin cells leads to the growth of degenerated cells which result in cancer<sup>10</sup>.

### **How can you protect yourself?**

- Invest in a good quality sun cream with both UVA and UVB protection, such as [Piz Buin](#).
- Make sure you use the correct factor for your skin type – the higher the protection the better. [Boots.com have a handy little tool to help you figure out the right SPF for you](#).
- Reapplying lotion at least every two hours will help to keep you protected against the sun's rays.
- However by far the best way to protect yourself and your skin from harmful rays is to stay indoors or in the shade – particularly between the hours of 11am and 3pm when the sun is at its peak.

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.aad.org/public/kids/skin/skin-cancer/what-causes-a-sunburn>

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.skincancer.org/skin-cancer-information/skin-cancer-facts>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.skincancer.org/skin-cancer-information/skin-cancer-facts>