

Your Health

 Health Partners

JULY 2024 NEWSLETTER



**TRAVEL,
SUN & YOU!**

In this issue of *Your Health*, our focus is on the summer season, with articles on travel health (what to be aware of when you travel abroad or overseas, plus advice on how to be safe no matter where you go), sun awareness (the various risks associated with sun exposure and how to protect your skin and body) and celebrating International Self-Care Day (how to take care of your whole self, physically and emotionally). Enjoy!

Travel Health

As we enter the summer holidays season, we should be mindful of the different challenges that might crop up if we travel – either here in the UK or further afield.

Holidays – and travel in general – have the potential to present certain health challenges, especially if you have pre-existing conditions. Research has found that our attitude to risk and behaviour overall can also change whilst on holiday, making us more prone to doing things we wouldn't otherwise do and increasing our vulnerability to accidents.

These challenges may include, but are not limited to:

- ▶ flare-ups of existing medical issues including heart disease;
- ▶ accidents – hazardous sports, drowning, road traffic accidents;
- ▶ infection – including COVID-19;
- ▶ jet lag;
- ▶ deep vein thrombosis (DVT);
- ▶ sunburn/heatstroke;
- ▶ security issues.



Most trips will be low risk, but the following factors can increase risk:

- ▶ travel to remote or less developed areas;
- ▶ poor local infrastructure;
- ▶ restricted access to or poorer quality medical facilities;
- ▶ extreme climatic conditions;
- ▶ transportation challenges;
- ▶ people's behaviours.

Before the trip, we recommend having as much information as possible at your disposal so you are prepared.

- ▶ Read up about the local area. Take a look at the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office website to get advice about travelling abroad, including

the latest information on COVID-19 and any relevant requirements for your destination, safety and security, entry requirements and travel warnings: www.gov.uk/foreigntravel-advice.

- ▶ If you are in an area endemic for malaria, remember ABCD:
 - Awareness;
 - Bite prevention;
 - Chemoprophylaxis (malaria tablets);
 - Diagnosis and treatment.
- ▶ Get medical advice about immunisations and prophylactic/preventative medication, e.g. for malaria, well ahead of the trip. You can look at: www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk/home.aspx.
- ▶ Discuss any outstanding concerns and

“Our attitude to risk can change whilst on holiday”

the impact that travel may have on your pre-existing health conditions with your GP/practice nurse.

- ▶ Make sure that you have enough medication for your trip, including medication rescue packs for those that may need them and pack in your hand baggage.
- ▶ Consider buying a traveller's medical kit, extra masks, gloves, hand sanitisers and disinfectant wipes.

Safeguarding Your Health in the Sun: A Guide for Sun Safety and Heat Protection

As the mercury rises and the sun beams down, it's essential to understand the risks associated with prolonged sun exposure and hot weather. The allure of a sun-kissed glow might be tempting, but it is crucial to balance the desire for a tan with the need to protect your skin and overall health. Skin cancer is one of the most common forms of cancer in the UK with 224,000 skin cancers in 2019 and over 1.4 million skin cancers between 2013-2019.

In this article, we delve into the potential health risks posed by too much sun and show how you can enjoy the summer weather safely.

Understanding the Risks

Excessive exposure to the sun's ultraviolet (UV) rays can lead to various health issues, ranging from short-term discomfort to serious long-term conditions. We have listed out below some of the conditions that can be caused by too much sun or sunburn:

- ▶ **sunburn:** the most immediate and obvious effect of too much sun is sunburn, which can range from mild redness to severe blisters, peeling and pain. Repeated sunburns can significantly increase the risk of other sun-related health issues;
- ▶ **heat exhaustion and heatstroke:** in hot weather, the body can struggle to regulate its temperature, leading to heat exhaustion or, in more severe cases, heatstroke. Symptoms include heavy sweating, rapid pulse, dizziness, nausea and fainting;
- ▶ **dehydration:** the sun and heat can quickly dehydrate the body, especially if you are active and not drinking enough water. Dehydration can lead to headaches, lethargy and, in severe cases, heatstroke;
- ▶ **skin cancer:** perhaps the most serious



risk of too much sun is skin cancer, including melanoma, which can be deadly if not detected early. UV radiation is a major contributor to the development of most skin cancers;

- ▶ **premature ageing of the skin:** UV exposure can also cause premature ageing of the skin, known as photo-ageing, which includes wrinkles, leathery skin, sunspots and a loss of skin elasticity.

Protecting Your Skin Health

To mitigate these risks, it's important to take proactive measures to protect your skin:

- ▶ **use sunscreen:** apply a broad-spectrum sunscreen with a high SPF (30 or higher) to all exposed skin and reapply every two hours, immediately after swimming or

after any physical exercise that leaves you sweating;

- ▶ **wear protective clothing:** long-sleeved shirts, trousers and wide-brimmed hats can provide an extra layer of protection against UV rays; clothes with built-in UV protection are especially beneficial;
- ▶ **seek shade:** limit your direct exposure to the sun, especially between 10 am and 4 pm when the sun's rays are strongest – use umbrellas, canopies or find a shady spot to help reduce UV radiation;
- ▶ **wear sunglasses:** protect your eyes from UV rays by wearing sunglasses that offer 100% UV protection;
- ▶ **avoid tanning beds:** tanning beds emit UV radiation that can be as harmful as or even more harmful than sunlight – it's best to avoid these altogether.

You should take extra care in the sun if you:

- ▶ have pale, white or light brown skin;
- ▶ have freckles or red or fair hair;
- ▶ tend to burn rather than tan;
- ▶ have many moles;
- ▶ have skin problems relating to a medical condition;
- ▶ are only exposed to intense sun occasionally (for example, while on holiday);
- ▶ are in a hot country where the sun is particularly intense;
- ▶ have a family history of skin cancer;
- ▶ are on any prescribed medication that makes you more susceptible to sun and heat (check the patient information leaflet that comes with the medicine).

Find out more about skin cancer at www.macmillan.org.uk/cancer-information-and-support/skin-cancer/types-of-skin-cancer

Staying Safe in Summer Weather

Beyond skin health, it's important to safeguard yourself against other risks associated with hot weather:

- ▶ **stay hydrated:** drink plenty of fluids throughout the day, even if you don't feel thirsty – water is the best choice for hydration;
- ▶ **monitor physical activity:** exercise during cooler parts of the day, such as early morning or evening, and take regular breaks in the shade to cool down;
- ▶ **be aware of heat sensitivity:** certain people, including the elderly, young children and those with chronic health conditions, may be more susceptible to heat-related illnesses;
- ▶ **listen to your body:** pay attention to signs of heat exhaustion or heatstroke, and seek medical help if you or someone else experiences severe symptoms.

The law does not state a minimum or maximum temperature for indoor working.

“It is vital to approach sun exposure with caution”

However, if a significant number of employees are complaining about the heat, your employer should undertake a risk assessment and act on its results.

In conclusion, while the sun and hot weather can offer much enjoyment and provide essential vitamin D, it is vital to approach sun exposure with caution. By respecting the power of the sun and taking the appropriate precautions, you can protect your skin and health, ensuring a safe and enjoyable summer season.

Sources:

www.skinhealthinfo.org.uk, NHS Digital, NHS, Macmillan

ADVICE FOR MANAGERS

When working outdoors, hot weather may have an adverse impact on employee health if not managed correctly. Simple ways to minimise harm include:

- ▶ rescheduling outdoor work to cooler times of the day;
- ▶ providing more frequent rest breaks and introduce shading to rest areas;
- ▶ providing free access to cool drinking water;
- ▶ supplying shade in areas where individuals are working;
- ▶ encouraging the removal of personal protective equipment when resting to help encourage heat loss;
- ▶ educating workers about recognising the early symptoms of heat stress.



Self Care

Many of us will experience loneliness at some stage of our lives. Self-care refers to the practice of taking an active role in protecting one's own wellbeing and happiness, particularly during periods of stress. It encompasses a broad range of activities and practices that individuals might engage in to promote their own physical, mental and emotional health.

Self-care can take many forms, depending on individual preferences and needs. There are myriad ways in which you can practice self-care, and you may wish to spend time thinking of activities that you personally enjoy. We have compiled a short list below for you to consider.

Physical self-care

- ▶ Engaging in regular physical exercise, such as going for walks, practicing yoga, or playing a sport.
- ▶ Ensuring adequate sleep by maintaining a regular sleep schedule.
- ▶ Eating a balanced and nutritious diet.
- ▶ Scheduling regular medical check-ups and following through with medical advice.
- ▶ Taking time to rest and recover when feeling unwell.

Emotional self-care

- ▶ Practicing mindfulness or meditation to manage stress and enhance emotional wellbeing.
- ▶ Keeping a journal to express thoughts and feelings.
- ▶ Allowing oneself time to engage in relaxing activities, such as taking a bath or reading a book.
- ▶ Seeking therapy or counselling when needed.

Social self-care

- ▶ Spending quality time with friends and family.
- ▶ Joining clubs or groups to meet new people and foster a sense of community.
- ▶ Setting boundaries in relationships to



- ▶ maintain a healthy work-life balance.
- ▶ Communicating needs and feelings to others assertively and respectfully.

Spiritual self-care

- ▶ Engaging in prayer or spiritual practices that align with personal beliefs.
- ▶ Practicing gratitude, such as reflecting on or writing down things for which one is thankful.
- ▶ Spending time in nature to connect with the environment.
- ▶ Participating in a community or group that shares similar spiritual values.

Intellectual self-care

- ▶ Reading books or listening to podcasts

“Self-care is personal and what works for one person might not work for another”

- ▶ that inspire or educate.
- ▶ Engaging in creative activities like painting, writing, or playing a musical instrument.
- ▶ Taking courses or attending workshops to learn something new.
- ▶ Engaging in stimulating conversations or debates to challenge one's mind.

Workplace self-care

- ▶ Taking regular breaks during the workday to prevent burnout.
- ▶ Setting realistic goals and managing workload effectively.
- ▶ Seeking mentorship or professional development opportunities.
- ▶ Creating a workspace that is comfortable and conducive to productivity.

The concept of self-care is not about being selfish or indulging oneself excessively; it's about taking care of oneself to ensure that one can be healthy and effective in all aspects of life, including helping and caring for others. It's important to maintain a balance and to recognise when self-care is needed to recharge and prevent burnout.

Self-care is personal and what works for one person might not work for another. Remember to listen to your own body and mind and to engage in activities that you find restorative and beneficial for your overall health and wellbeing. YH

NEXT ISSUE:

- National Wellness Month
- Women's Health

At Health Partners we offer a full range of tailored health and wellbeing services.

Our thinking is innovative. We constantly develop new responses and tools designed to address the health and wellbeing challenges that face your business and people.

Our commitment is total. We invest in our services, creating new ones and keeping in step with every client. We constantly explore new ways of working and make no compromises in the quality of our services.

Simply put, we are here to help people be their best.