

## SUNBURN QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

*Don't Fry Day*



### ***Don't Fry Day* Sunburn Questions and Answers**

#### **Why is it important to avoid sunburn on *Don't Fry Day* - and every day?**

Sunburns are painful, and should be avoided for that reason. But sunburns represent skin damage. Your skin can repair some damage to DNA that results from too much sun, but this safety mechanism can be overwhelmed by the massive DNA damage caused by a sunburn. Mutations that are not repaired can lead to the development of skin cancer. This is why we should all avoid sunburn, especially for children. But wait, there's more: sun's skin-damaging ultraviolet (UV) rays also produce free radicals in skin cells, which can lead not only to cancer but also to wrinkles, blotches, and premature aging.

#### **If *Don't Fry Day* is cloudy, I don't need to take any precautions, right?**

In fact, some of the worst sunburns happen on hazy days. Many people mistakenly assume that if it's cool or cloudy outdoors they won't get burned. They don't realize that while clouds block the heat (infrared) energy, UV rays can still penetrate through quite strongly.

#### **What are other causes of sunburn?**

Probably the most common cause of sunburn is accidental overexposure. Falling asleep while in the sun, forgetting to apply or re-apply sunscreen, or underestimating how quickly your skin will burn are typical mistakes. There may be no signs or symptoms while the overexposure is occurring because it can take hours following the exposure before the skin becomes red or tender. If you stay in the sun until your skin turns red, it may already be severely damaged.

#### **I won't get sunburned, because I already have my 'base tan' to protect my skin from the sun throughout the summer.**

A suntan is the skin's way of trying to protect itself from additional sun damage. Because DNA or cellular damage is the prerequisite for pigment production, a suntan is a sure sign that the skin has been harmed. This is why it can be said that "there is no safe tan."

#### **I have already had a bad sunburn - what can I do now to reduce my risk of skin cancer?**

Unfortunately, we do not yet have an effective treatment to reverse all the damage and mutations caused by a sunburn. First aid treatment is aimed at alleviating pain and inflammation, and preventing or treating any subsequent infection. In the most severe and debilitating cases, hospitalization may be required. Any area of skin that has sustained one or more sunburns will carry an increased risk for the development of skin cancer; please remember to ask your doctor to check your skin regularly for any unusual or changing skin growths.

More tips for avoiding sunburn are provided by The National Council on Skin Cancer Prevention at [SkinCancerPrevention.org](http://SkinCancerPrevention.org)

Be sure to make every day *Don't Fry Day!*

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