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# NEWS

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\*\* Part V: Skin Problems and Infections:  
hints for a flawless summer.

## SKIN PROBLEMS AND INFECTIONS

DALLAS--Exposed skin during the summer invites more than compliments. There are many dermatologic problems that flare up as a result of sun, heat and outdoor activities, but certain precautions can keep you from itching for the hot weather to be over.

### Athlete's Foot

The fungus that causes athlete's foot affects not only feet, but hands and the groin area as well. Producing cracked and itching skin, the fungus may be carried by some people all the time, but warm, moist environments can make it worse.

Prevention is difficult, said Dr. Paul Bergstresser, associate professor of Dermatology at The University of Texas Health Science Center at Dallas. The best thing to do, he says, is use foot powder or other anti-fungal medications and eliminate the moist environment--wear cotton socks and underclothes and change them often, wear sandals or open or leather shoes, not plastic or vinyl, and go barefoot at home as often as possible.

Infected hands are more difficult to treat. Often in this case or whenever the discomfort persists, a physician should be consulted, said Bergstresser.

### Cold Sores

Often this non-sexually transmitted virus first appears during childhood. Original symptoms can be severe, and the characteristic cluster of blisters are most common in and around the mouth. Later in life many people will have recurrences of the same viral infection. Cold sores can be brought on by sunlight, fever or stress and last from a few days to a couple of weeks, said the dermatologist.

Little can be done to prevent cold sores except to stay out of the sun or use a high-powered sunscreen on the lips.

### Swimmer's Ear

Too much wax, dirt or water in the ears can encourage the growth of fungus or bacteria. To prevent swimmer's ear, use ear plugs or, after swimming, put a couple of drops of rubbing alcohol from a cotton swab into the ear to facilitate drying and roll the head to allow water to drain out, said Bergstresser.

### Sunburn

Contrary to popular belief, a person does not need to get a sunburn to start a tan. Gradual exposure is the healthiest way to tan.

Using sunscreen and minimizing exposure to the harmful rays will do three things: prevent painful sunburn, ward off premature aging and decrease the chance of skin cancer, says Bergstresser.

(over)

summer emergencies -- skin problems and infections

"Sunburn is too much of a bad thing," he said. "If I want to cause cancer in my laboratory animals, all I have to do is shine a sunlamp on them. Burning yourself with lamps or sun is sheer craziness."

If you want to get a healthy glow, says Bergstresser, go outside for one-half hour and then put sunscreen on, but it's important to use it every time you go outside. The higher the SPF number of the sunscreen is, the more protection it provides.

Stay out of the sun between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.

Sunlamps and pills that dye the skin pigment should not be used. There is a concern, says Bergstresser, that the pills, which are a derivative of vitamin A, and not approved by the FDA, may even accelerate cancer.

So far, he says, there has been no danger found in using the indoor tanning lotions except that they provide no protection from ultraviolet rays.

Once burned, lotions and a tepid bath may ease the pain somewhat, but time is the best remedy.

#### Dermatitis

Bacterial infections are more prominent in the summer because of the increased outdoor activity. Redness, pain and boils on the skin or crusted sores around the mouth area usually require a visit to a doctor and the use of antibiotics.

Such infections are always asymmetrical--one part of the body is infected worse than its counterpart, he says.

#### Contact Dermatitis

Coming into contact with plants, such as poison ivy, can cause an allergic immune reaction symptomized by swelling, redness, blistering, itching and warmth. Again, the infection is asymmetrical and lasts until the foreign material is removed by the body, usually one to three weeks.

Immediately after contact, wash very well a couple of times to remove as much of the villain oil as possible. Although poison ivy is not transmitted from person to person, it can be carried on pet fur and can stay in fabric, so be sure to wash any clothes, blankets or towels that may have come in contact with you or the plant.

Minor cases of poison ivy can be treated with an over-the-counter hydrocortizone cream, however, more extensive eruptions should be treated by a physician.

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