

Coordinated by the European Institute of Women's Health
<http://www.eurohealth.ie>

Risk Factors

Sun Exposure



Sunburn and Sun Tanning

There are two main types of UV that you are exposed to. UVA is responsible for tanning, wrinkling and premature ageing. UVB rays are potentially very dangerous. Overexposure to UVB rays can cause sunburn, skin cancer, cataracts (clouding of the lens of the eye) and can damage your immune system. Tanning is your body's natural reaction that occurs when your skin is exposed to the sun and UV radiation. When you suntan, your body produces more melanin, a chemical inside the skin. This forms a layer – the tan – to protect the skin.

The lighter your skin, the less melanin your skin can make therefore the easier it can be damaged by UV rays. A tan will block out some radiation but it is not an adequate protection against skin cancer. Sunburn is reddening of the skin, caused by overexposure to the sun. It can occur both on the skin and the eyes. A sunburn will get worse, even after you move out of the sun. It is a delayed reaction with most pain occurring 12-24 hours after exposure. Sunburn is a serious injury, especially in young children. Serious sunburn can increase your risk of developing skin cancer in later life.

Skin type: fair skin that burns easily and people with freckled skin.

Moles: people with a lot of moles.

People who live in or visit hot climates

Sunbeds: Most sunlamps produce UVA and UVB rays. The rays can cause premature ageing and the risk of getting skin cancer is increased.

Short-term Damaging Effects include: Sunburnt skin | skin irritation | eye irritation or conjunctivitis if suitable goggles are not worn.

Long-term Damaging Effects include: Premature ageing of the skin which will then look leathery and wrinkled. | Skin cancers-the more exposures, the greater the risks. | Increased risk of cataracts later in life if suitable goggles are not worn.

Remember Do not use sunbeds and don't rely on the protection from a tan that you have (whether from the sun or cosmetic tanning equipment) for protection.
