



Skin Safety

The skin is your body's largest organ. It protects your internal organs from environmental irritants, infections, and ultraviolet light; all of which can be harmful. Take good care of your skin so it can do its job. Keep your skin clean and protect it from injury. (See “**Skin Injuries**” at www.HealthyLearn.com.)

Protect Your Skin From Sun Damage

Do you look forward to semester breaks so you can relax in the sun and get a tan? Many students do. A suntan looks good, but it is a sign that your skin is trying to protect itself from damage. Be especially careful not to get sunburned. In fact, you should never get sunburned! It can lead to premature aging, wrinkling of the skin, and skin cancer. (Be extra cautious if you have a family history of skin cancer.) Even if you are not concerned about these problems now, the pain and blisters that come with a severe sunburn can make spring break unbearable.

The risk for sunburn is increased for persons with fair skin, blue eyes, red or blond hair, and for persons taking some medicines. These include birth control pills; some antibiotics, such as tetracycline and sulfa drugs; and Benadryl, an over-the-counter antihistamine.

To Prevent Sunburn

- Avoid exposure to the midday sun (10 a.m. to 4 p.m. standard time or 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. daylight saving time).
- Use sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 15 to 30 or more when exposed to the sun. The lighter your skin, the higher the SPF number should be. Apply the sunscreen 15 to 30 minutes before you go out in the sun.

Use about 2 tablespoons to adequately cover all exposed body parts. Reapply sunscreen every 60 to 90 minutes, even if the sunscreen is water-resistant.

- Along with sunscreen, use moisturizers, makeup, lip balm, etc. that contain sunscreen. Use water-based ones if you have acne.
- Wear a wide-brimmed hat and long sleeves.
- Wear clothing with sunscreen protection or muted colors, such as tan. Bright colors and white reflect the sun onto the face.
- Wear sunglasses that absorb at least 90% of both UVA and UVB rays.

Tattoo and Body Piercing Safety

You may already have one or more tattoos and/or area(s) of your body pierced. You may be thinking about getting one of these procedures done as a way to fit in and look like others; as a way to express your individuality; and/or to get noticed. Before you get a tattoo or a part of your body pierced, consider the following:

- In many states, the law does not allow minors to get tattoos. Find out about this in your state.
- Unsterile tattooing equipment and needles can transmit serious infectious diseases, such as tetanus, hepatitis B, and HIV. Never do one of these procedures on yourself or have anyone else do it that is not certified by the Association of Professional Piercers (APP) or the Alliance of Professional Tattooists (APT). Certified members are trained in strict safety and health requirements. Because of the high risk of infection, you cannot donate blood for one year after getting a tattoo.



Skin Safety, Continued

- Tattoos and body piercings also carry the risk of less serious local infections. You will need to follow proper care procedures for weeks or months after the procedure to reduce the risk of getting an infection. You may also get large growths of scar tissues called keloids.
- Tattoos are not easily removed and in some cases may cause permanent discoloration. Keep a record of the dyes used in the tattoo you get. This includes the lot number of each pigment. If you choose to get a tattoo removed in the future, this information will be helpful. Think carefully before getting a tattoo and consider the possibility of an allergic reaction. Know that it is expensive, too, to get a tattoo removed. Don't get a tattoo or body piercing done on an impulse. Wait at least 24 hours. In the meantime, read about the things to consider in this topic and see **“For Information, Contact”** places on this page. Also, ask your friends who have tattoos and/or body piercings about their experiences. Find out about the pain involved, the healing time, the cost, etc.
- Visit several tattoo parlors to see whether the tattooist follows recommended safety guidelines and sterilization techniques, such as using a heat sterilization machine regulated by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).
- According to the APT guidelines, these practices should be followed:
 - The tattooist should have an autoclave (a heat sterilization machine regulated by the FDA) on the premises.
 - Consent forms (which the customer must sign) should be handed out before tattooing.
 - Immediately before tattooing, the tattooist should wash and dry his or her hands thoroughly and put on medical latex gloves, which should be worn at all times during application of the tattoo.
 - Needle bars and tubes should be autoclaved after each customer. Non-autoclavable surfaces, such as pigment bottles, drawer pulls, chairs, tables, sinks, and the immediate floor area, should be cleaned with a disinfectant, such as a bleach solution.
 - Used absorbent tissues should be placed in a special puncture-resistant, leak-proof container for disposal.
- For body piercing, to avoid allergic reactions and infections, jewelry made from non-corrosive, non-toxic metals should be used. Examples are solid 14K gold (not gold-plated), niobium, surgical stainless steel, and titanium.
- After the procedure, follow the skin care guidelines provided by your skin piercer or tattooist. Care of the site will depend on its location and/or the procedure you had done.



For Information, Contact:

For Sun Safety

National Cancer Institute
800.4.CANCER (422.6237)
www.cancer.gov