

# Sun Poisoning

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Sun poisoning refers to a case of severe sunburn. It occurs after you've been exposed to ultraviolet (UV) rays from the sun for an extended period of time.

Also known as polymorphic light eruption, sun poisoning can come in different forms based on your sensitivity to the sun. Unlike a mild sunburn, sun poisoning usually requires medical treatment to prevent complications.

## II. DEFINITION

Sun poisoning is classed as severe sunburn. It is defined as extreme reaction to too much time spent in the sun. Sun poisoning is a medical emergency.

## III. RISK FACTORS

- have fair skin
- have relatives who've had skin cancer
- are taking antibiotics
- take oral contraceptives
- are using certain herbal supplements, such as St. John's wort
- apply citrus oils to the skin prior to sun exposure
- live in a region that's near the equator
- reside in high altitudes (such as mountainous regions)
- frequent the beach, as sunlight reflects more intensely off sand and water
- engage in regular snow activities during the winter — sun reflects off snow, too
- are using alpha hydroxy acids (AHAs), such as chemical peels

## IV. SYMPTOMS

There are a number of different symptoms associated with sun poisoning. The most common and obvious symptom is a reaction on the skin.

It may look and feel similar to an allergic reaction and is characterized by the following symptoms:

- Itchiness, bumps, or blisters: The skin may become itchy, and bumps or blisters may appear on the affected area.
- Pain and swelling: The affected area of skin may be painful, and can have the appearance of eczema lesions. The skin may be red or swollen, as well.
- Darkening of the skin: In some cases, the skin affected may become darker. This is known as hyperpigmentation.

### Another group of symptoms include:

- fever
- nausea
- headaches

These symptoms can be mistaken for the flu or similar viral conditions.

Sun poisoning may be linked to an increased risk of skin cancer.

## V. TYPES

### 1. Acute vs. chronic

There are acute and chronic variations of sun poisoning. Acute sun poisoning is when symptoms are relatively mild and temporary and pass with treatment.

Chronic sun poisoning is characterized by serious symptoms that are ongoing. It can be difficult to prevent and to treat some cases of chronic sun poisoning, making medical advice essential.

### 2. Sun poisoning vs. sunburn

Sun poisoning and sunburn are very similar conditions. It is possible to mistake the more serious and long-lasting condition of sun poisoning for sunburn.

- **Sunburn**

Sunburn can occur when skin has been exposed to direct sunlight for a long time.

The symptoms of sunburn include redness of the skin, which can be warm to the touch. The skin may also be itchy, and begin to peel after some time.

Sunburn usually fades after a while. In extreme cases, the sunburn can be accompanied by fever and nausea. Sunburn can affect anyone who is exposed to sunlight for too long.

- **Sun poisoning**

The main difference between sun poisoning and sunburn is that the former is a type of allergic reaction. It occurs when the skin has been exposed to strong UV light for too long.



- **TREATMENT**

Treating sun poisoning involves focusing on the specific symptoms. Getting medical advice is always recommended when treating sun poisoning.

- **Dressing**

Applying clean, damp dressing to erupted blisters or open wounds can help them to heal. This also reduces the risk of infection.

- **Light therapy**

In some situation, light therapy may be required. Sometimes known as phototherapy, this involves exposing the skin to certain wavelengths of light.

This controlled light can help to slow the growth of damaged skin cells. Light therapy may help to relieve pain and manage symptoms.

- **Drug therapy**

In some cases, a treatment including drugs may be needed. This is uncommon and is usually only recommended for those who are highly sensitive to light.

Drug therapies for sun poisoning may be recommended if light therapy is not an option. Both short-term and long-term drug treatments are available.

- **Dietary changes**

Sun poisoning can be treated with dietary changes.

The benefits of nutritional therapy for sun poisoning are not well studied. However, it is known that a diet with all the essential vitamins and minerals can help to reduce the risk of photosensitivity.

## VI. PREVENTION OF SUN POISONING

The ways of preventing sun poisoning are similar to those for preventing sunburn:

- **Reduce exposure:** Avoiding prolonged exposure to intense sunlight is recommended. This could include, covering exposed skin with clothing, wearing a hat, or staying in the shade where possible.
- **Use sun lotion:** Applying sun lotion to exposed skin is recommended. A higher factor sun cream will provide greater protection for the skin, and will be more effective at reducing the risk of sun poisoning.
- **Be aware of side effects of medication:** Some types of medication may increase sensitivity to sunlight. It is important to be aware if any medication increases the risk of sun poisoning.
- **Avoid tanning beds:** Use of tanning beds is not recommended, and most medical experts will advise avoiding them.

## VII. CONCLUSION

If you have a sun allergy, the outlook is usually very good, especially if you consistently use sunscreens and protective clothing. Most people with PMLE or actinic prurigo improve significantly within five to seven years after diagnosis, and almost everyone with photoallergic eruption can be cured by avoiding the specific chemical that triggers the sun allergy.

## REFERENCES

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