



Self-Care – Sunscreen / Sunburn

Guidance in Care Homes

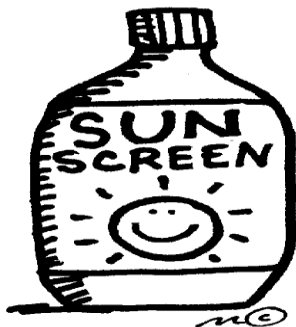
Taking care of your “SELF” – Supporting Everyone to Live Freely

This is a self-care guide designed for those working in care homes, residential homes and assisted living.

The information provided in this guide does not replace person-centred clinical advice.

The following information should be used as a guide when advising or purchasing self-care treatments for people residing in a care home, residential home or assisted living. Self-care medication and medical products are not always the most appropriate choice for treating minor ailments. Sometimes starting with a lifestyle change or trying natural remedies can be more effective.

Should you have any concern, at any time around self-care items being purchased on behalf of the resident or being brought in by relatives for the residents use, please discuss with your community pharmacist or GP practice.



What is Sunburn?

Sunburn occurs when the skin is damaged by ultraviolet (UV) rays. When the skin is exposed to UV rays it becomes red, warm, sore and tender if not protected effectively. Once damaged the skin may start to flake and peel after a few days, and will usually fully heal within 7 days.

Dangers of Sunburn:

- Sunburn can increase your risk of developing skin problems in later life, such as premature ageing (wrinkling) and skin cancer



Remember: Sunburn doesn't just happen abroad. You can burn in the UK even if it's cloudy

How can you protect yourself from Sunburn?

- If a resident is sitting outside or will be going out for the day, you can advise they stay in the shade as much as possible, especially between 11am and 3pm which is when the sun is at its peak
- Advise the resident to cover up as much as possible and to apply enough sunscreen to ensure they do not burn
- Make sure that the resident wears suitable clothing if going out in direct sunshine
- The resident can use sunglasses to protect their eyes
- They could be advised to wear a wide brimmed hat to protect the head and neck

Who is most at risk of sunburn?

- The resident has very pale or white skin
- The resident has freckles, red hair or fair hair
- The resident has a history of burning rather than tanning
- The resident has a lot of moles
- The resident has skin problems relating to a medical condition

Sunscreen

- If purchasing a sunscreen on behalf of a resident, make sure the sunscreen is suitable for their skin type (or one they have always found works for them)
- To be most effective, the sunscreen needs to block both ultraviolet A (UVA) and ultraviolet B (UVB) radiation
- Sunscreen should be applied to all areas of exposed skin, including the face, neck and ears before going outside (according to the product instructions)
- Apply sunscreen to the top of the head where the hair maybe thinning. For best protection advise using of a wide brimmed hat



The sunscreen label should have:

- The letters "UVA" in a circular logo and at least 4 star UVA protection
- Sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 15 to protect against UVB
- Make sure you advise / assist the resident to apply enough sunscreen. If applied too sparsely then it will not be effective
- Higher factors will provide more protection
- If the resident will be out in the sunshine for a long time then you will need to advise / assist with applying at least twice, 30 minutes before they go out and then apply again just before they go out
- If swimming, exercising or likely to sweat or in contact with water, you should use a water resistant sunscreen

What to do if a resident becomes sunburnt:

- If a resident gets sunburnt, you should advise they come out of the sun as soon as possible
- Cool the skin by offering the resident a cool bath, shower or strip wash
- Advise the use of gentle lotions such as aloe vera to soothe the sore skin
- Advise and encourage drinking plenty of fluids to cool the resident down and help prevent dehydration
- Advise that they stay out of the sun until the sunburn is fully healed
- Some painkillers can be used to relieve mild pain and discomfort. You should refer to the homely remedies policy (if in place) or speak to a community pharmacist for advice on what would be most suitable
- Mild sunburn can usually be treated with self-care, however if you have concerns you may want to seek advice from a community pharmacist

You should only need to contact the GP if:

- The sunburn appears to be severe. Severe sunburn includes: blistering, swelling, chills and a high temperature (exceeding 38°C)
- Symptoms of heat exhaustion:
 - headache
 - dizziness and confusion
 - loss of appetite and feeling sick
 - excessive sweating and pale, clammy skin
 - cramps in arms, legs and stomach
 - fast breathing or pulse
 - intense thirst



- You are concerned about the resident and their condition and feel it is essential they are seen by a medical professional.

NHS Wakefield Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) has taken the decision to stop the routine prescribing of a range of products, including sunscreens for skin protection from UV radiation, as they are widely available to purchase from supermarkets and community pharmacies.

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References:

NHS Choices: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/sunburn/>

PrescQIPP: <https://www.prescqipp.info/newsfeed/bulletin-138-sunscreens-now-available-to-all-prescqipp-users>

Wakefield CCG: https://www.wakefieldccg.nhs.uk/wakefield-ccg-news/news/?tx_news_pi1%5Bnews%5D=21&tx_news_pi1%5Bcontroller%5D=News&tx_news_pi1%5Baction%5D=detail&cHash=e021733bc5bc87b6186cd6dee513b8ab