



Some people may experience **sensitivity to sunlight** after using certain medications.

This is known as a **photosensitivity reaction** and can result in symptoms such as severe sunburn, itching, rash, or swelling. The Ultraviolet A (UVA) portion of sunlight is primarily responsible for triggering these effects. UVA is present throughout the day and year and is readily transmitted through window glass.

The two types of reactions that may occur are phototoxicity and photoallergy.

Phototoxic reactions can occur in response to injected, oral, or topically applied products. Symptoms may appear within a few minutes to several hours after exposure to UV light. They look like a bad sunburn with redness, swelling and blisters, and appear on exposed parts of the body.

Photoallergic reactions are less common and usually occur due to topically applied medications. They involve the immune system, and symptoms can appear immediately after sun exposure or may take longer to develop. These reactions may look like eczema and can spread to areas of the body not exposed to sunlight.

Some anticancer drugs may cause photosensitivity reactions. In order to protect yourself against these reactions, there are certain precautions that you can take.

1. Avoid unnecessary exposure to UV light including sunlight, tanning beds, and sun lamps.
2. When outside, cover up with a long-sleeved shirt, long pants or skirt and a broad-brimmed hat made out of tightly woven, dark coloured fabric. If light shines through the fabric, then UV can also go through it.
3. Use a broad-spectrum sunscreen (protects against both UVA and UVB) that has a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 30. Consult your community pharmacist for more information.



SUNSCREEN APPLICATION

- ◆ Apply at least 15 to 30 minutes before sun exposure to allow time for the product to diffuse into the skin.
- ◆ Apply generously to all exposed areas, including tops of ears, under chin, and balding areas. Avoid eye area.
- ◆ Reapply at least every 2 hours and after swimming
- ◆ Discontinue use if rash or irritation occur.



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BC Cancer Agency

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