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The sun is a source of energy, both positive energy and negative energy. The sun stimulates the production of vitamin D, it aids in the fixation of calcium in the bones, and it is a source of health for everyone. However, solar rays also pose a danger to the skin. The sun emits different types of radiation; ultraviolet rays A (UVA) and ultraviolet rays B (UVB) are the two types that most affect our skin. UVA rays are responsible for the production of melanin that creates the pigment in our skin as well as aging our skin. UVB rays produce reddening of the skin, sunburn and production of melanin several days later. UVB rays can alter the genes in the cells of our skin and are related to the appearance of skin cancer.

Visible sun light does not affect the skin; infrared rays produce heat and are responsible for

water loss through the skin. It is important to note that the dangerous UVB rays are invisible to our eyes and are capable of reaching the Earth's surface through the clouds. This is why we can get sunburned on a cloudy day. It is crucial to limit the amount of exposure to the sun especially between ten in the morning and four in the afternoon and to wear a sunscreen with a SPF factor of at least 15.

There are six skin phototypes based on color and resistance to the sun: types I to III (white), type IV (light brown), type V (brown) y type VI (dark brown or black). Types I and II are most susceptible to burning.

Drink water regularly and frequently even if you do not feel thirsty. Our bodies need water to remain healthy. Avoid alcoholic drinks and caffeinated drinks as they offer temporary thirst relief, but actually worsen the effects of the heat on our bodies. Beer, especially, causes dehydration.

Watch for signs of heatstroke; heatstroke can be fatal. The system that creates sweat to cool us stops functioning. Therefore, the body temperature rises to a level that can cause brain damage and even death. Signs of heatstroke include: skin that is hot, dry and red, changes in consciousness, rapid and weak pulse, and shallow breathing. Move a person with these signs to a cooler place. Wrap the person in a wet sheet. Apply icepacks or cold compresses to wrists, ankles and neck. Have the person lay down and watch for difficulty breathing.

For sunburn, apply cold, moist compresses. You can alleviate pain by taking a pain reliever such as aspirin, ibuprofen or paracetamol. Keep the burned area clean to avoid infection. If blisters appear, avoid breaking them. Mild infections can be treated with an antibiotic ointment as per your doctor's instructions. For more severe burns, wash the skin well, cover with sterile gauze and go immediately to a doctor or clinic.

Should a child show signs of sunstroke (fever, vomiting, cold sweat, or dizziness) take the child to a doctor or clinic. The child should drink plenty of water.

Protect your eyes from the dangerous effects of UV rays with sunglasses that have a UV filter. Be sure that the sticker indicates at least a 90% UV absorption level.

Protect your feet from burning on hot sand or stepping on sharp objects by wearing shoes.

Be careful in the water. The best way to protect yourself in the water is to learn to swim. Always swim with someone else, never alone. Avoid swimming if you are tired, cold, far from a safe area, hot, or agitated. Do not swim after drinking alcohol as it alters your judgment, focus, balance and coordination as well as compromises your body's ability to stay warm. At the first sign of bad weather, get out of the water.

You can stay safe and enjoy the beach by educating yourself about these dangers!