Sun Facts
The burning issues
Know the Sun Facts

The sun makes us feel happy and relaxed, improves our mood and provides essential vitamins to help keep our bodies healthy.

However, over-exposure to harmful sunrays, especially when we are young, can damage the skin and lead to skin cancer.

Sunsunscreen

Use sunscreen labelled ‘broad spectrum’ which protects against both UVA and UVB rays and has a minimum SPF 15 or higher (always use a higher SPF for fair or sensitive skin).

For sunscreen to be effective it is important to apply generously to clean, dry skin before going out into the sun. Reapply regularly, at least every two hours and always after coming out of the water.

Remember sunscreen protection is not just for holidays. You can burn even on a cloudy day or when enjoying the snow. Relying on sun creams to prolong time spent in the sun can increase your overall exposure to the sun and the risk of skin cancer.
Cover up

Wear loose fitting clothing made from tightly woven natural fibres to protect the skin from the sun’s rays.

Cover up with a long-sleeved shirt, trousers and a wide-brimmed hat to shade the face. For the eyes wear good-quality, wraparound sunglasses that are British standard approved to protect your eyes from UVA and UVB rays.

Resist the temptation to ‘strip off’ when it is hot and sunny, always stay covered up. If your hair is thinning or closely cropped in style be sure to protect your scalp, ears and neck.

Seek the shade

Avoid the hottest part of the day between 11.00 am and 3.00 pm by spending time in the shade under umbrellas, trees, canopies or indoors.

Seek the shade and always limit the length of time spent in the sun. If working outdoors or playing sport, remember your skin needs protection and always wear a hat.

Encourage activities and play in shaded areas if at all possible. Choose the shady part of the garden or park during the hottest part of the day.
Know your skin

Take extra care in the sun if you have pale skin, moles and freckles, red or fair hair and pale eyes.

Be careful if you have previously suffered from severe sunburn, a family history of skin cancer (melanoma) or had a previous skin condition or melanoma.

Check your skin regularly and be aware if an existing mole is getting larger or changing shape, or a new one is growing. If a mole, skin bump or sore area is inflamed or is bleeding, oozing or crustling, has a change in sensation or becomes itchy or painful, always seek medical advice without delay.

Drink water

Aim to drink at least 6-8 glasses or more of water a day, especially in hot weather.

Water helps you to stay fit and refreshed, have healthier skin, fresher breath and better concentration.

Dehydration can cause headaches, fatigue, depression, dry skin, constipation and kidney problems.

Water from the tap is inexpensive and good for you. Try chilling a bottle of tap water in the ‘fridge, it tastes good and is always ready for use. When holidaying abroad drink bottled water. Drink more, don’t wait until you are thirsty!
Babies and young children

Protect young children as their skin is delicate and should be kept out of direct sunlight.

Keep babies of all skin colours out of the sun completely as sunburn can lead to skin cancer later in life. Teach older children to apply and regularly reapply sunscreen properly.

Dress young children in protective clothing and encourage them to wear a hat as this will shield the head, face, ears and neck.

Don’t forget sun protection even on cloudy days as sunburn can still occur. Never let children get sunburnt and choose sunscreens that are formulated for children and babies as these are less likely to irritate their skin.

Be a role model for your child by protecting your skin and seeking the shade.
Sunbeds

Avoid using sunbeds as these are not safer than being exposed to the sun’s rays and offer no protection against sunburn.

Sunbeds, sunlamps and tanning booths give out ultraviolet (UV) rays which can cause skin cancer. Many sunbeds give out greater doses of UV rays than the midday Mediterranean sun. You should never use a sunbed if you are under 18, have fair or freckly skin, burn easily, have lots of moles, have had skin cancer in the past, have a family history of skin cancer or are using medication that increases your sensitivity to UV. Use of sunbeds or lamps causes premature ageing of the skin making it coarse and wrinkled.

Take care not to burn

Sunburn increases your risk of skin cancer, premature ageing, wrinkles, heat exhaustion and sunstroke.

For further information visit:

NHS choices  
www.nhs.uk/conditions/sunburn  
www.nhs.uk/conditions/cancer-of-the-skin

Cancer Research UK 
www.cancerresearchuk.org  
or contact
your own doctor, practice nurse, health visitor, community pharmacist.