



## **Meds, Photosensitivity & Sun Safety**

*“Medication can make some people more sensitive to the sun and heat.”*

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Photosensitivity is a common side effect of medications, herbal remedies, sunscreens and even perfumes.

Summer is here, and as a result, more and more people are enjoying outdoor activities. If you take medication, one of the things you might want to think about before going outside, is how to protect yourself from potential photosensitivity.

Sun sensitivity or photosensitivity is the inflammation of the skin, as the result of being exposed to sunlight while taking certain medications.

People who experience photosensitivity will usually first experience a burning or stinging sensation on their exposed skin. Within 24 hours the exposed skin area will most likely show some damage; ranging anywhere from redness, to swelling, to blisters in more severe cases.

It is suggested that if you are taking medication, that you ask your doctor how to best protect yourself when in the sun.

### **SOME PRECAUTIONARY STEPS**

When a person can't avoid sun exposure, there are some precautionary steps that can be taken to help reduce the effects of photosensitivity.

- Avoid or limit the amount of sun exposure during the hours between 10 am and 4 pm.
- Apply a broad spectrum sunscreen with an SPF of 30 or higher, at least 30 minutes prior to sun exposure.
- Wear light colored protective clothing such as a wide brim hat, long sleeve shirt and pants.
- Use sunglasses with impact resistant lenses that offer 100% UV protection.
- Check with your doctor or pharmacist about your medications' drug photosensitivity potential.
- Reapply sunscreen every 2 hours, since sunscreen gradually wears off. You will also want to reapply sunscreen after swimming or strenuous activity resulting in heavy perspiration.

## SAMPLE LIST OF MEDICATIONS

This is a sample list of some medications that may increase a person's sensitivity to the sun.

Not everyone who takes these medications will develop photosensitivity reactions. It's important to keep in mind that some people have more susceptibility to these medications than others.

It is suggested that if you are taking any medication and plan to be out in the sun, that you ask your doctor how best to protect yourself while in the sun.

The following medications have been linked with photosensitivity in some people.

- **Acne medications** - isotretinoin (Accutane), acitretin (Soriatane)
- **Antibiotics** - Doxycycline, Tetracycline, Ciprofloxacin, Ofloxacin, Levofloxacin, trimethoprim
- **Anticonvulsants** - Carbamazepine (Tegretol), Felbamate (Felbatol), Gabapentin (Neurontin)
- **Antidepressants** - Elavil, Imipramine, Desipramine, Ludiomil, Desyrel (Trazadone), Norpramine, Parnate, Sinequan, St. John's Wort
- **Antihistamines** - Promethazine, Diphenhydramine (Benadryl)
- **Antihypertensives** - Aldactazide, Capozide, Cardizem, Diltiazem
- **Antiparkinsonians** - Cogentin, Artane, Symmetrel
- **Cardiac Drugs** - amiodarone (Cordarone), nifedipine (Procardia), diltiazem (Cardizem, Dilacor, Tiazac)
- **Cholesterol Drugs** - Simvastatin, Atorvastatin (Lipitor), Lovastatin
- **Diabetic drugs** - sulfonylureas [chlorpropamide (Diabinese), glyburide (Micronase, DiaBeta, Glynase)]
- **Diuretics** - Furosemide (Lasix), Bumetanide (Bumex), Hydrochlorothiazide (Microzide, Esidrix)
- **Fragrances** - Musk Ambrette, 6-methylcoumarin, Sandalwood
- **Hormones** - Corticosteroids (Prednisone), Oral contraceptives
- **Hypoglycemics** - Glucotrol, glyburide
- **Neuroleptic Drugs** - Chlorpromazine, Fluphenazine, Perphenazine, Thioridazine, Thiothixene
- **Nonsteroidal-anti-inflammatory drugs** - Ibuprofen (Advil and Motrin), Naproxen (Aleve, Naprosyn), Celecoxib (Celebrex), Ketoprofen (Orudis)
- **Psychiatric drugs** - Thorazine, Compazine, Stellazine, Mellaril, Navane, Trilafon, Haldol, Loxitane, Prolixin, Risperdal
- **Skin medications** - photodynamic therapy for skin cancer [ALA or 5-aminolevulinic acid (Levulan), Methyl-5-aminolevulinic acid]

## REMEMBER!

Speak with your doctor or pharmacist

It's important to ask them doctor how best to protect yourself while in the sun.

Photo from Microsoft

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*Please consult your health care provider for an appointment, before making any healthcare decisions or for guidance about a specific medical condition.*

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*Linda Ziac is the owner and founder of The Caregiver Resource Center. The Caregiver Resource Center is a division of Employee Assistance Professionals, Inc. which Linda founded in October 1990. The Caregiver Resource Center provides a spectrum of concierge case management and advocacy services for seniors, people with special needs and families.*

*Linda's professional career spans more than 48 years in the health and mental health field as a CT Licensed Professional Counselor, CT Licensed Alcohol and Drug Counselor, Board Certified Employee Assistance Professional, Board Certified Case Manager, and Board Certified Dementia Practitioner. In addition, Ms. Ziac has 15 years of experience coordinating care for her own parents.*

*Linda assists seniors, people with special needs and their families; in planning for and implementing ways to allow for the greatest degree of health, safety, independence, and quality of life. Linda meets with individuals and family members to assess their needs, and develop a Care Team, while working with members of the Team to formulate a comprehensive Care Plan (a road map). Once a plan is in place, Linda is available to serve as the point person to monitor and coordinate services, and revise the plan as needed. This role is similar to the conductor of an orchestra; ensuring that there is good communication, teamwork, and that everyone remains focused on the desired goal.*

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