



Welcome to The Scar Management Clinic

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Burns Scars
(Spending time
outdoors)

Salisbury NHS Foundation Trust

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You are entitled to a copy of any letter we write about you. Please ask if you want one when you come to the hospital.

The evidence used in the preparation of this leaflet is available on request. Please email patient.information@salisbury.nhs.uk if you would like a reference list.

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information

Note:

According to the EU Recommendation in 2006, the UVA protection for each sunscreen should be at least a third of the labelled SPF. A product that achieves this requirement will be labelled with a UVA logo, as below:



Not all manufacturers have kept up to date with this EU requirement.

- Be aware that the healed skin may also be more allergic to sunscreens and other skin products.
- For dry skin use an oil-based sunscreen. For skin that tends to breakout use a water-based product.
- Avoid using alcohol-based sunscreens as these may dry or irritate the skin.
- Try opaque creams rather than clear gel sunscreens for better sun protection.
- Use children's PABA free sunscreens for infants and children less than six years of age.

Please ask Scar Management Clinic staff if you have any further questions.

If you work outside please ask staff for further information.

Senior staff at the scar management clinic

Clinical Scientist:

Dr Mark Brewin, PhD

Physiotherapist:

Hollie Carpenter

Sister:

Amy Johnson

Contact details

Burns Unit (Ask for the senior nurse)

Tel: 01722 345507 (Mon - Fri, 9 - 5pm)

The colour of your skin

When you suffer a deep burn, you lose the outermost layer of skin, which is called the epidermis. Melanin, which gives the skin its brown/black colour or 'pigmentation', is found in the epidermis. This melanin may have been lost. Injured areas in some burn survivors may therefore end up lighter in colour when healed. You may be aware that sun exposure increases 'pigmentation' in the skin. This is what we usually call 'tanning'. However, sun exposure may also affect the final colour of a burn injury. Too much exposure may result in the injured area becoming darker than the areas surrounding it.

Caring for your healing skin

Newly healed skin is weaker than the skin that it replaces. It is therefore more sensitive to the sun. During the first year after injury your healing skin may not be able to tolerate the sun's rays, more specifically ultraviolet (UV) radiation. This also applies to any graft donor sites or areas you may have. As a result:

- the more recent your scar, the greater the need to protect it from sunlight.
- your skin burns more quickly and may blister.
- there may be higher risk of skin cancer.
- too much UV radiation can cause permanent discoloration of your skin.

Be sensible about going out in the sun.

If you are exposed to the sun, loose-fitting, dry clothing with tightly woven, thicker, darker and unbleached fabrics offer

good protection.

If it is not possible to keep burns covered with clothing, a high sun protection factor (SPF 30 or more) sunscreen should be applied (see next page). This corresponds as high to very high protection.

With a deep burn wound, sweat glands and hair follicles may also be destroyed and are not replaced when the skin heals. As sweating is important in controlling body temperature burn survivors often have difficulty in hot and humid conditions.

Top tips

- Avoid exposing your scar to the sun as much as possible especially when the scar is young.
- Cover the area with clothing to minimise exposure to UV radiation when outside. Always apply sunscreen to exposed areas. Consider wearing a wide-brimmed hat to reduce exposure to the head, face and neck.
- Be aware that you are still exposed to some UV radiation in the shade.
- Avoid direct sun exposure between 11 am and 3 pm when UV levels are highest.
- Fog, haze, or clouds can reduce UV exposure but, remember, sunburn can still occur. Snow, sand, water and metal can reflect up to 90% of UV light and will increase exposure.
- Avoid tanning beds and **do not** use tanning creams over grafted or donor areas until the skin has

matured, 12 – 18 months post-graft.

- All children younger than 6 months of age should be kept out of the sun whenever possible. Children older than 6 months should follow the same recommendations as those mentioned for adults.
- UV protective swimwear is available and gives protection when it gets wet. UV rated clothes are not required for general wear as normal clothes can provide adequate protection.

Putting on sunscreen, cream or lotion

Where the area cannot be covered with clothing use sunscreen, regardless of your skin colour, as follows:

- Apply sunscreen generously and frequently:
- Apply at least 6 full teaspoons to cover the body of an average adult.
- Reapply sunscreen every 2 hours or after swimming, drying off or excessive sweating.
- Apply a water-resistant, broad-spectrum sunscreen with both UVA and UVB protection.
 - SPF applies to UVB – Use SPF 30 or greater
 - Star rating applies to UVA – Use 4 stars or more. Alternatively, look for the UVA symbol in circle (shown overleaf).
- **Wait 30 minutes for the sunscreen to be absorbed into the skin** before exposure to UV.