

Play to Win for Healthy Skin

Lesson Title: Skin and Sports

Page 1 of 2

Name: _____

Your skin does a good job of protecting you around the clock, whether you're sledding down a hill or sleeping in your bed. Here are some ways you can help protect your skin from common sources of damage when you're exercising and playing sports.

Moisture

Sweating is the way the body keeps your temperature constant by getting rid of excess water and salt. You naturally sweat when you exercise or play every sport, but here's how to prevent problems:

- Wear loose clothing. This will allow the sweat to evaporate and keep your body temperature from getting too high.
- Wear absorbent socks—especially wool—and change them often. Air out your shoes when you're not using them.
- Dry off, bathe, and put on clean clothes as soon as possible after exercising. Bacteria can grow on moist skin, leading to problems like athlete's foot and skin rashes.
- Be especially careful when doing contact sports like wrestling. Skin infections can be passed from one participant to another.
- Do not compete in contact sports if you have a communicable skin infection, such as impetigo or herpes.

Friction

Irritation can occur when wet skin rubs against clothing, athletic equipment, or other skin surfaces. The result can be blisters, especially on the palms of the hands and soles of the feet. These can be a real problem for runners, cyclists, and rowers.

Here's what to do:

- Lubricate your hands and feet with petroleum jelly.
- Use gloves or wrap your hands with gauze or protective bandages.
- Wear shoes that fit properly. Break in new shoes gradually so your feet can adjust to them.
- Wear two pairs of socks.
- Never cut off the top of a blister. Cover the blister with a bandage.

Sun

Ultraviolet rays from the sun can damage your skin and even cause skin cancer. Here's how to protect your skin from sunburn and even more serious skin problems no matter what outdoor activity you're doing:

- If possible, avoid being out in the sun between 10 A.M. and 4 P.M., when ultraviolet rays are the strongest.
- Apply a sunscreen with an SPF of 30 or higher, but no less than 15, 30 minutes before going out in the sun. Spread it liberally on all exposed surfaces of your skin. If possible, reapply the sunscreen

All rights reserved. Science NetLinks Student Sheets may be reproduced for educational purposes.

Play to Win for Healthy Skin

Lesson Title: Skin and Sports

Page 2 of 2

Name: _____

after 15 minutes to cover any areas you may have missed. A gel sunscreen may work best for you if you sweat a lot or will be in the sun for an extended time.

- Reapply sunscreen every two hours. Swimmers should reapply it every time they come out of the water.
- Use lip balm with an SPF of 30 or higher to protect your lips.
- Wear protective clothing on as much of your body and head as you can. Remember, a hat protects your head, but leaves your neck and ears exposed.
- Sun reflects off of water and snow, so swimmers and skiers should be especially careful. Skiers are at risk also because ultraviolet radiation is stronger at high elevations.

Water

Ironically, exposure to water can cause your skin to dry out. The chemicals in swimming-pool water also can irritate the skin and discolor hair. Swimmers, water skiers, and other participants in water sports should follow these tips:

- Use moisturizers on your skin after coming out of the water.
- Wear bathing caps and apply conditioner to your hair before covering it.

Cold

Being outside for extended periods in low temperatures can cause frostbite. Skiers, snowboarders, and ice skaters should pay particular attention to these suggestions:

- Wear layers of loose clothing.
- Make sure your ears, cheeks, nose, fingers, and toes are well covered.
- Check yourself regularly for numbness, pain that stops suddenly, or loss of color.
- Warm the near-freezing areas as soon as possible. Do not rub or massage the skin, though, because this can cause more damage.

Injury

Doing any physical activity can result in a fall or collision with an object or a person. This, in turn, can injure the skin, producing cuts, scrapes, and bruises. Here's how to keep these problems to a minimum:

- Be careful.
- Wash any area of broken skin as soon as possible and apply antibiotic ointment and a bandage.
- Put ice on a bruise as soon as you can. After 48 hours, you can apply heat to the area.