

## **Ask Dr. Mikell**

By Dr. Oswald Mikell

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#### **Summer rashes and bites**

With the summer heat at full blast, summer isn't always fun in the sun. Intense sunlight, hot and humid temperatures, poisonous plants and biting insects can cause a host of skin problems.

#### **Q: lately when I'm exposed to the heat I develop a rash – what is it and what can I do about it?**

**A:** It could be heat rash. When sweat ducts become plugged and trap perspiration beneath the skin a clusters of red spots or small, blisterlike bumps that are extremely itchy or prickly may appear. You will find this typically in skin folds or wherever clothing causes friction.

You should dress soft, lightweight, loose-fitting cotton clothing and avoid powders and heavy creams that can block skin pores. Once the rash appears, try to keep your skin cool, apply cold water compresses, calamine lotion or over-the-counter hydrocortisone cream .

#### **Q: I've been working in my yard and developed a rash that I think is poison ivy. How should it be treated?**

**Direct contact with poison ivy and poison oak** causes red, swollen skin, blisters and severe itching within days or weeks of exposure. If you realize that you have made contact you should immediately wash with soap and water. For a mild rash, cool showers, calamine lotion or hydrocortisone cream can relieve symptoms. For severe rashes, or rashes that involve the face, eyes or genitals, you should call your physician. Prescription medications, such as an oral corticosteroid, may be needed to reduce itching and swelling.

#### **Q: Shortly after leaving the beach this weekend, I developed itchy red spots on the front of the neck, on the chest, arms and thighs. Was this rash caused by being at the beach?**

**A:** This sounds like it could be **PMLE (Polymorphous Light Eruption) which appears shortly after exposure to** ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun or commercial tanning beds. Treat the affected areas with a cool compresses, hydrocortisone cream and try anti-inflammatory medications . PMLE usually clears up on its own in seven to 10 days, however, if the rash does not improve you should consult your physician.

#### **Q: What about diet?**

**A:** Contrary to popular myth, acne is not caused by chocolate, french fries, or pizza. In fact, there is no connection between diet and acne - food does not cause acne.

#### **Q: Does the sun help heal acne?**

**A:** No, in fact ultraviolet light in sunlight increases the risk of skin cancer and early aging of the skin. Additionally, many acne treatments increase the skin's sensitivity to ultraviolet light, making the risk of ultraviolet light exposure all the worse.

#### **Q: Can anything be done about scarring caused by acne?**

**A:** The best method for scar prevention is acne treatment. However if you already have scarring, there are treatments to help. While treatments must always be individualized for the specific patient, chemical peels , dermabrasion or laser abrasion can provide results – but keep in mind, it is important that the acne be well-controlled before any procedure is used to alleviate scarring.

**Q. *How long will it take before I see results from treatment?***

**A.** Try to be realistic. Regardless of the treatment you use, acne can't be cured, only controlled. You won't start seeing improvements from most treatments for six to eight weeks, and your acne might appear worse before it gets better. But if you stick to your treatment - you'll see clearer skin.

**Q. *How do I know what treatment is best for me?***

**A.** Everyone's acne should be treated individually. If you have not had any success with over the counter products, you should Call Dermatology Associates of the Lowcountry and schedule a consult (843) 689-5259. Our experienced staff will decide which treatments are best for you.