



# Patient Education Sheet

## The Sun and Sjögren's Syndrome

*The SSF thanks Mona Z. Mofid, MD, FAAD, Diplomate, American Board of Dermatology, and Medical Director, American Melanoma Foundation, San Diego, California, for authoring this Patient Education Sheet.*

**Ultraviolet (UV) radiation** emitted from the sun and other light sources (such as some fluorescent lights) can alter immune function and lead to an autoimmune response in the body and in the skin. Skin rashes and disease flares in Sjögren's syndrome (SS) patients can result as well as ocular sensitivity and pain. In Sjögren's, sun sensitivity is associated with the autoantibody SSA/or Ro. To avoid reactions to UV light, try the following tips:

- ▶ Protect your skin and eyes through use of sunscreen, sunglasses, ultraviolet light-protective clothing, hats, and non-fluorescent lighting.
- ▶ Use sunscreen that protects against both UVA and UVB rays. Doctors now recognize the dangers of UVA light in addition to those of UVB.
- ▶ Read the label! Look for the words "broad spectrum," which often are used to mean protection from both UVA and UVB light. Note that SPF ratings refer only to UVB rays. In the U.S., a "star" rating on products is coming into increased use to help consumers figure out how much UVA protection is provided. A European rating referred to as "PFA" measures UVA protection.
- ▶ Use plenty of sunscreen! Most people only use about 1/3 the recommended amount of sunscreen. This reduces the benefit of the SPF rating.
- ▶ Use a higher number SPF sunscreen.
- ▶ Remember that water, humidity and sweating decrease sunscreen effectiveness and mean you must reapply your sunscreen.
- ▶ Wear sun-protective clothing. It is designed to protect your skin from UVA and UVB rays, is more reliable than sunscreen, does not wash off or need to be reapplied, can be washed and dried quickly, and, compared to sunscreen, is not known to cause skin reactions.
- ▶ Don't forget to wear sunscreen on areas not covered by sun-protective clothing, such as the neck and ears.
- ▶ Consider purchasing UV-protective car and home window films (which come in clear) and tinting.
- ▶ Wear good UV-protective eye lenses and sunglasses.
- ▶ Seek the shade when outside.
- ▶ Investigate whether UV-protective clothing and eyewear, window shields, and sunscreens are eligible for reimbursement under your insurance plan or Flexible Health Care Spending Account.

For more information on Sjögren's syndrome, visit the SSF Web site at [www.sjogrens.org](http://www.sjogrens.org), call 800-475-6473, e-mail [ssf@sjogrens.org](mailto:ssf@sjogrens.org) or write to the Sjögren's Syndrome Foundation, 6707 Democracy Blvd, Suite 325, Bethesda, MD 20817.

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