

Newsletter November 2004

Ginny Clarcq RN, BSN Walpole Area VNA

Many drugs contain an ingredient which may produce a reaction when your skin is exposed to sunlight. The skin reaction can range from the development of a fine rash, to blistering, reddening and scaling. Do not ignore the warnings. Even limited exposure can cause problems. Reflected light, as from snow or pavement, may activate the problem, as well. Not everyone will be sensitive, and sometimes a reaction only occurs after the first exposure to sunshine. Also, the type of reaction varies depending on the drug.

The list of drugs which may cause photosensitivity is quite long and includes, antidepressants, antihistamines, antibiotics, diuretics, oral diabetes medications and high blood pressure medications. Even anti-inflammatory drugs, such as ibuprofen and naprosyn, have been reported to increase sensitivity to sunlight. Ask your pharmacist for information about each of the medications you take, in order to assure their effectiveness and prevent complications.

So whether you're off to a sunnier climate for the winter, or taking walks on good weather days during our northern winter, always protect yourself by applying sunscreen according to directions and avoid prolonged sun exposure. Wear hats and sunglasses and avoid sunlight between 10am and 4pm, when the light is most intense. By following this general advice, you'll be protecting yourself against skin cancer, as well.

Reach me at vclarcq@tiac.net