

TO SAVE YOUR SKIN

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SPECIALIST (BELOW)
GIVES GOLFERS
TIPS TO AVOID THE
WORST FROM THE
SUN AND HAZE

Dr Gavin Ong, Specialist in Dermatology, The Skin Specialist, a Singapore Medical Group clinic, answers queries about skin problems faced by golfers.

What are the most common skin problems golfers face, and why?

Common skin problems include premature skin aging with increased facial wrinkles, sagging face, pigmentation and a general lacklustre of the complexion of the face.

Golfers are also at increased risk of developing serious skin conditions like skin cancers.

Whilst sunlight has some beneficial roles like inducing vitamin D production in the skin, it also contains very high levels of ultraviolet (UV) and infrared radiation.

UV radiation is well known to directly cause DNA damage in skin cells. It can also generate highly reactive particles known as reactive oxygen species that can further damage cellular DNA. It can also weaken the immune system and reduce the body's ability to detect early cancer.

Infrared radiation can affect gene expression.

The combined effects will lead to premature skin aging, pigmentation and an increased risk of various types of skin cancers.

What is the proper treatment for these skin ailments?

For premature aging skin, a good moisturiser, topical skin lightening creams and topical antioxidants are beneficial.

Chemical peels, pigment laser and laser resurfacing treatments will help to reduce the appearance of wrinkles, fine lines and light pigmentation.

Neuromodulators are useful when deep lines appear during facial expression.

For more serious skin conditions, skin biopsies are required to determine if rashes, spots or moles are cancerous. For skin cancers, the first choice treatment will be to remove them surgically.



What should golfers do to prevent getting serious skin problems?

They should avoid playing golf when the sun is the strongest – from 10am to 4pm. If that is not feasible, they should wear the correct outfit to protect them from the sun's harmful rays.

These include sunhats, long-sleeved clothing, sunglasses and umbrellas. Regular application of sunscreen of at least SPF 30 and PA+++ on exposed skin is also helpful.

How does the haze affect skin and how should golfers protect their skin from its effects?

Haze contains dust particles (particulate matters) and other chemicals such as sulphur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide, carbon monoxide and ozone.

The dust particles can dry the skin and may clog skin pores. The accompanying chemicals are irritating in high concentrations and can cause increased skin irritations.

Although the haze may give the impression that the amount of sunlight is weaker, the ambient UV light is still high.

The ambient UV light, in combination with the haze, can accelerate skin aging.

Sun avoidance measures and a good skin care regimen are key to reduce the effects of premature skin aging. Skin antioxidants and good moisturiser will help to protect the skin and reduce the harm due to haze.