

Be SunSmart

Skin cancer is the most common cancer diagnosed in Australia. More than 430,000 Australians are treated a year for skin cancers. Of these, over 10,500 new cases of melanoma are diagnosed. Each year there are around 1600 deaths from melanoma and non-melanoma skin cancer. Australia has the highest rate of skin cancer in the world.



The major cause of skin cancer is too much exposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun. Skin can burn in as little as 15 minutes in the summer sun so it is important to protect your skin from UV radiation.

Avoid using solariums or sunbeds, which emit harmful levels of UV radiation up to five times as strong as the summer midday sun.

Skin cancer is largely preventable. Be SunSmart. Protect yourself against sun damage and skin cancer by using a combination of these five steps:

Slip on protective clothing



Choose clothing that covers as much skin as possible eg long sleeves and high necks/collars, is made from close weave materials such as cotton, polyester/cotton and linen and if used for swimming, is made from materials such as lycra, which stays sun protective when wet.

Slop on SPF+ sunscreen



Make sure your sunscreen is broad spectrum and water-resistant. Sunscreen should not be used to increase the amount of time you spend in the sun and should always be used with other forms of protection. Apply sunscreen liberally to clean, dry skin at least 20 minutes before going outside and reapply every two hours.

Slap on a hat



A broad brimmed, legionnaire or bucket style hat provides good protection for the face, nose, neck and ears which are common sites for skin cancers. Caps and visors do not provide adequate protection. Choose a hat made with closely woven fabric—if you can see through it UV radiation will get through. Hats may not protect you from reflected UV radiation, so also wear sunglasses and sunscreen to increase your level of protection.

Seek shade



Make use of trees or built shade structures, or bring your own! Staying in the shade is an effective way to reduce skin exposure. Whatever you use for shade, make sure it casts a dark shadow and use other protection (such as clothing, hats, sunglasses and sunscreen) to avoid reflected UV radiation from nearby surfaces.

Slide on some sunglasses



Sunglasses and broad brimmed hat worn together can reduce UV radiation exposure to the eyes by up to 98 per cent. Choose close-fitting wrap-around sunglasses that meet the Australian Standard AS 1067. Sunglasses are as important for children as they are for adults.

Remember to take extra care between 10am and 3pm when UV radiation is most intense.

Look out for the SunSmart UV Alert which tells you the time period in which you need to be SunSmart—it appears on the weather page of most daily newspapers or go to www.bom.gov.au/weather/uv

Check your skin regularly and see a doctor if you notice any unusual skin changes. If you have any concerns or questions, please contact your doctor.

More Information

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