

Tennis stars serve SunSmart message ahead of Australian Open

Tennis stars, John Newcombe, Felix Mantilla and Alicia Molik are urging players and spectators to be SunSmart while enjoying the on court action at this year's Australian Open.

John Newcombe and Felix Mantilla know only too well the dangers of skin cancer and are reminding patrons that sun protection matters at any age.

Mr. Newcombe, said: "Considering the amount of time I have spent in the sun I have been very lucky. However I have still had three skin cancers removed from my face, the last one requiring 64 stitches. My advice to players and spectators alike is to get SunSmart this summer!"

Former World Number 10, Felix Mantilla from Spain, learned in late 2005 that he had a cancerous mole on his back, which would have been deadly if it hadn't been removed. Mantilla, who never actively sought a tan, was shocked on discovering how close he came to losing his life.

"Sunscreen is just one part of keeping your skin safe," warns Mr. Mantilla. "A wide brimmed hat, long sleeved clothing and sunglasses are all essential to avoid skin damage from the sun."

Two in three Australians will be diagnosed with skin cancer by the age of 70 yet tragically skin cancer is one of our most preventable cancers.

SunSmart Manager Sue Heward says sun protection at the Australian Open is critical as ultraviolet radiation (UV), which causes skin cancer, reaches its peak in Victoria during this time of year.

"Even if it's cloudy, during January the UV reaches high to extreme levels and it can take just 11 minutes to burn and cause damage to your skin and eyes," she says.

"Tennis spectators can be out in the sun for long periods of time, so it's vital they plan ahead. Shade can block out up to 75% of direct UV so it's an important suit of armour against too much UV. Fans should take particular care on the outside courts where shade is more limited and remember to cover-up with sunscreen, clothing, hats and sunglasses."

Some courtside tips:

Check the UV Alert each day at sunsmart.com.au or on your phone using the free SunSmart app. During the sun protection times, remember to use a combination of the five sun protection measures including:

1. Slip on some sun-protective clothing - that covers as much skin as possible such as collared shirts and three-quarter-length trousers and tops.
2. Slop on SPF30+ broad-spectrum sunscreen 20 minutes before you head out and re-apply every two hours. Apply at least a teaspoon of sunscreen to each arm, leg, front of body and back of body and at least ½ teaspoon to the face (including the ears and neck).
3. Slap on a hat - a wide brimmed hat will protect your face, head, neck and ears. Baseball caps do not provide enough coverage.
4. Seek shade, especially during the middle of the day when UV levels are most intense.
5. Slide on some sunglasses - make sure they meet Australian Standards

Cancer Council sunscreen will be available to purchase at the Open. Money raised from sales will help fund Cancer Council's research, prevention and patient support programs.

For further information about sun protection, UV and skin cancer, visit sunsmart.com.au or call the Cancer Council Helpline on 13 11 20.

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