

UNDER STRICT EMBARGO until FRIDAY, 21 AUGUST at 00:01am AEST

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First-of-its-kind data shows non-melanoma skin cancer rates up to three times more common than all other cancers combined

AIHW data confirms skin cancer is Australia's most prevalent cancer, yet most are almost entirely preventable with sun protection habits, says Cancer Council Australia

A new report from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) has shed significant light on the scale of non-melanoma skin cancer in Australia.

The report is the first of its kind to use available data to better estimate diagnosis and deaths from the two most diagnosed types of non-melanoma skin cancer (NMSC), basal cell carcinoma and squamous cell carcinoma.

The report finds that around half a million Australians (535,000 people - 2% of the population) each year have at least one common non-melanoma skin cancer removed. By comparison, in 2021, around 15,000 people were diagnosed with melanoma and around 154,000 people were diagnosed with all other types of cancer combined.

The findings confirm previous research showing that common NMSC is around three times as common as all other cancers combined.

Additionally, in 2023-24 the combined health system expenditure of NMSC and melanoma was about \$2.5 billion making them the most expensive cancers (with NMSC costing \$1.9 billion, making it the third most expensive cancer and melanoma costing \$596 million).

Chair of Cancer Council's National Skin Cancer Committee, Sally Blane, said today's data shows just how serious Australia's skin cancer burden remains.

"These figures from the AIHW confirm what we see every day. Non-melanoma skin cancer is Australia's most common cancer by a significant margin, affecting half a million people every year and costing our health system close to \$2 billion annually.





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"Australia has the highest rate of skin cancer in the world. Two in three Australians will be diagnosed with skin cancer in their lifetime. Thankfully, we know most skin cancers can be prevented.

"The best line of defence is to be prepared whenever the UV Index is three or above. That means protecting against the sun in five ways: Slip on sun protective clothing, Slop on SPF50 or SPF50+, broad-spectrum, water-resistant sunscreen, Slap on a broad-brim hat, Seek shade when possible, and Slide on sunglasses."

The data confirms what Cancer Council Australia has long maintained: skin cancer is one of Australia's most common and preventable cancers. It's important all Australians are aware the risk of developing non-melanoma skin cancers is generally higher for people who work extensively outdoors, with lighter skin tone, live in regional and remote areas, with a family history of non-melanoma skin cancer, and those with a reduced immune system (immunosuppression).

"Most Australians will be affected by some type of skin cancer in their lifetime. We don't have to accept that. Australia's most common cancer is also the most preventable. Implementing sun protection habits at any age makes a real difference."

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Contact details

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About Cancer Council Australia

Cancer Council Australia is Australia's leading cancer charity, working to reduce the impact of cancer for all Australians. Cancer Council Australia works with its members, the eight state and territory Cancer Councils to:





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- Undertake and fund cancer research
- Prevent and control cancer
- Provide information and support for people affected by cancer
- Shape and influence policy and practice

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