



Skin cancer is the most common cancer diagnosed in Australia. Over 434,000 people are treated for one or more non-melanoma cancers in Australia each year and over 11,500 people are treated for melanomas. Each year there are more than 1800 deaths from melanoma and non-melanoma skin cancer. Australia and New Zealand have the highest rates 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.

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:

1. Slip on sun protective clothing

Choose clothing that:

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

2. Slop on SPF 30+ sunscreen

Make sure your sunscreen is broad spectrum and water-resistant. Don't use sunscreen to increase the amount of time you spend in the sun and always use with other forms of protection too. Apply sunscreen liberally to clean, dry skin at least 20 minutes before you go outside and reapply every two hours.

3. 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 enough 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.

4. Seek shade

Staying in the shade is an effective way to reduce sun exposure. Use trees or built shade structures, or bring your own! 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.

5. Slide on some sunglasses

Sunglasses and a 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.

6. Be UV alert

Take extra care between 10am and 3pm when UV radiation is most intense.

The SunSmart UV Alert tells you the time period in which you need to be SunSmart. It is on the weather page of most daily newspapers and on the Bureau of Meteorology website: www.bom.gov.au/weather/uv

Check your skin regularly and see a doctor if you notice any unusual skin changes. If you have a lesion that doesn't heal, or a mole that has suddenly appeared, changed in size, thickness, shape, colour or has started to bleed, see your doctor immediately. Treatment is more likely to be successful if skin cancer is discovered early.

Remember, if you have any concerns or questions, please contact your doctor.

Where can I get reliable information?

Cancer Council Helpline 13 11 20

Information and support for you and your family for the cost of a local call anywhere in Australia.

Cancer Council Australia website

www.cancer.org.au