

A workplace sun protection program

Health and safety legislation in each Australian state requires your employer to provide a safe working environment.

If you work outdoors and your workplace does not offer any sun protection measures, raise the issue with your health and safety representative or manager.

This legislation also states that, as an employee, you must cooperate with your workplace's sun protection program, so be sure to cover up against the sun.

If self-employed, it is in your best interest to look after yourself and use sun protection at work.

Your state or territory Cancer Council may be able to assist your workplace with its sun protection policy and resources.

If your job requires you to work outside, tax deductions are available for sun protection products. Talk to your tax advisor or contact the Tax Office by calling 13 28 61 or visiting their website at ato.gov.au



Looking out for skin cancer

Skin cancer can be successfully treated if found early. However, skin cancer can be fatal if left untreated.

We should all be aware of what is normal for our skin, especially as we get older. Skin cancer can grow quickly. Never rely solely on workplace skin cancer checks to detect skin cancer. If you notice any changes to your skin or have any concerns about skin cancer then you should talk to your doctor as soon as possible. Contact your state or territory Cancer Council for more information on knowing your skin and what to look for.

How to check your skin

- Check your whole body, including the soles of your feet, between your toes, your armpits, ears, eyelids, under your fingernails and scalp.
- Use a hand-held mirror, or have someone help you, to check areas you cannot see such as your back, the back of your neck and legs.
- Look for a new spot or a spot that is different from the ones around it.
- Look for a sore that does not heal.
- Look for a spot or mole that has changed in size, shape or colour.

See your doctor as soon as possible if you notice anything unusual.



Skin cancer and outdoor work



 Cancer Council
Helpline
13 11 20
www.cancer.org.au

For support and information on cancer and cancer-related issues, call Cancer Council Helpline. This is a confidential service.

National Relay Service	
Deaf or hearing impaired	13 3677
Speech impairment	1300 555 727
Cantonese and Mandarin	1300 300 935
Greek	1300 301 449
Italian	1300 301 431
Arabic	1300 301 625

For further information and details please visit our website: www.cancer.org.au

Images courtesy of QLD Health (2006)

March 2011



A guide for working safely in the sun

Are you at risk?

Working outdoors for part or most of the day can put you at a high risk of developing skin cancer, including melanoma. This is because ultraviolet (UV) radiation produced by the sun is a known carcinogen (something that causes cancer).

All skin types can be damaged by exposure to UV radiation. Damage is permanent and irreversible and increases with each exposure. Whenever working outdoors it is important to protect your skin and eyes.

Why protect your skin?

Australia has one of the highest rates of skin cancer in the world. At least two in every three Australians will develop skin cancer before they reach the age of 70.

Our skin cancer rates are high predominantly due to our fair skin and because Australia experiences some of the highest levels of UV radiation in the world. Even on cool or cloudy days, UV radiation can still be strong enough to damage unprotected skin and eyes.



Seek shade

- ✓ Work and take breaks in the shade. Where no shade exists, use temporary portable shade.
- ✓ Plan to work indoors or in the shade during the middle of the day when UV radiation levels are strongest.
- ✓ Plan to do outdoor work tasks early in the morning or later in the afternoon when UV radiation levels are lower.
- ✓ Share outdoor tasks and rotate staff so the same person is not always out in the sun.



Slip on some sun-protective work clothing

- ✓ Cover as much skin as possible. Long pants and work shirts with a collar and long sleeves are best.
- ✓ Choose lightweight, closely woven material with an ultraviolet protection factor (UPF) 50+.
- ✓ Choose loose fitting clothing to keep cool in the heat.



Slap on a hat

- ✓ A hat should shade your face, ears and neck.
- ✓ A broad brimmed styled hat should have a minimum 7.5cm brim.
- ✓ A bucket style hat should have a deep crown, angled brim of minimum 6cm and sit low on the head.
- ✓ A legionnaire style hat should have a flap that covers the neck and joins to the sides of the front peak.
- ✓ If wearing a hard hat or helmet use a brim attachment or use a legionnaire cover.

How to protect your skin

When working outdoors Cancer Council recommends these five simple steps to protect against sun damage.



Slide on some sunglasses

- ✓ Be aware that your eyes can also be damaged by the sun's UV radiation.
- ✓ Wear close fitting, wraparound style sunglasses.
- ✓ When buying new sunglasses, check the swing tag to ensure they meet the Australian Standard (AS/NZS 1067:2003 – category 2, 3 or 4) and are safe for driving.
- ✓ Look for an eye protection factor (EPF) 10.
- ✓ Safety glasses that meet AS/NZS 1337 still provide sun protection.
- ✓ Polarised lenses reduce glare and make it easier to see on sunny days.



Slop on SPF 30+ sunscreen

- ✓ No sunscreen provides complete protection so never rely on sunscreen alone.
- ✓ Choose sunscreen that is broad spectrum and water resistant.
- ✓ Apply sunscreen generously to clean, dry skin 15 to 20 minutes before you go outdoors.
- ✓ Reapply every two hours or more often when sweating.
- ✓ Protect your lips with an SPF 30+ lip balm.
- ✓ Always check and follow the use by date on sunscreen.

Remember to use these five steps together for the best protection.

Getting the right balance of sun and vitamin D

The sun's UV radiation (UVR) is both a major cause of skin cancer and a great source of vitamin D. How much sun do you need to maintain adequate vitamin D levels? In summer, most people only need a few minutes of sun each day outside peak UV times on the equivalent skin area to that of the face, arms and hands. During winter, in southern parts of Australia, some people may require a few hours of sunlight to their face, arms and hands spread over each week. People with naturally dark skin also require more UVR to maintain their vitamin D levels. These variables mean there are different requirements for everyone. The best way to find out how much sun you need is to contact your local Cancer Council on 13 11 20. You can also chat to your GP or find out more at www.cancer.org.au

Cover up when the UV reaches 3 or above

UV radiation cannot be seen or felt. It can damage our skin without us knowing. We recommend sun protection when the UV levels reach 3 and above. This depends on your location in Australia. You can check the SunSmart UV Alert in the weather section of the newspaper, online at www.bom.gov.au/weather/uv or at www.cancer.org.au. You can also download the SunSmart UV alert app available free at iTunes, and a UV Alert widget for websites available free at www.cancer.org.au

