

SKIN CANCER: THE FACTS AT YOUR FINGERTIPS.

Did you know?

- Two in three Australians will develop skin cancer before the age of 70.
- More than 95% of all skin cancers in Australia are caused by overexposure to the sun.
- Finding skin cancer at an early stage significantly increases the chance of successful treatment.

What is skin cancer?

Skin cancer is an uncontrolled growth of damaged skin cells. Each time your unprotected skin is overexposed to ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun, it permanently changes the structure of the DNA in the skin cells. Damage gets worse with each exposure.

There are three main types of skin cancer: basal cell carcinoma (BCC), squamous cell carcinoma (SCC) and melanoma. There are other, rarer skin cancers too.

Are you at risk?

All Australians have some risk of developing skin cancer. People with any of the following are at an increased risk:

- fair skin
- fair or reddish hair
- freckles or many moles
- skin that burns easily and cannot easily develop a tan
- a family history of melanoma
- a childhood spent in Australia
- a history of blistering sunburn during childhood

Those who work or spend a lot of leisure time in the sun and those that don't protect their skin from the sun are also at increased risk.

The good news

Reducing exposure to the damaging effects of the sun is the most effective way to prevent skin cancer.

What you can do to save your skin

Be SunSmart and protect yourself in five ways when the UV Index is 3 or above.

What is the UV Index?

The best way to know when you need to use sun protection is to use the UV Index. The UV Index is a scale developed by the World Health Organization that measures the amount of UV radiation reaching the Earth's surface. The values of the Index range from zero upward and the higher the Index value, the greater the potential for damage to the skin and eyes, and the less time it takes for harm to occur.

| UV index |
|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11+ | |

(Source: World Health Organization 2002)

You need to use sun protection when the UV Index is 3 or above.

The free SunSmart app provides a UV forecast and lets you know when you need sun protection, making it easier than ever to be smart about your sun exposure all year round.

The UV Index can also be found at www.myUV.com.au, on the Bureau of Meteorology website and other sources of news and weather.

How to protect yourself when the UV Index is 3 or above

Protect yourself in **five ways** from skin cancer



SLIP



SLOP



SLAP



SEEK



SLIDE

1. Slip on protective clothing

Look for clothing that covers as much skin as possible such as long sleeve shirts, trousers or long skirts, and shirts with collars.

2. Slop on SPF30 or higher sunscreen

Wear broad spectrum, water resistant sunscreen with a sun protection factor of 30 or higher. Sunscreen does not provide 100% UV protection and should be used in combination with protective clothing and hats.

Remember to re-apply at least every 2 hours, check the expiry date and store sunscreen in a cool dry place.

3. Slap on a hat

Baseball caps and visors do not provide enough sun protection as they leave the ears and the back of the neck exposed. Look for broad-brimmed, bucket or legionnaire-style hats.

4. Seek shade

Staying in the shade can be one of the most effective ways to reduce sun exposure but clothing, hats, sunscreen and sunglasses should also be used to ensure maximum sun protection.

5. Slide on some sunglasses

Look for the Australian standard label and choose wrap around styles that fit close to the face.

For an online guide
on how to check your skin
and what to look for, visit
myUV.com.au/skincancer

For more information visit
cancerwa.asn.au

or call Cancer Council on
13 11 20

Get to know your skin

It is important to get to know your skin. Learn what is normal for you so changes will be quickly noticed. Over 95 per cent of skin cancers can be treated successfully if detected early.

Most skin cancers are found by people checking their own skin or are noticed by a loved one. All Australians, particularly those aged 40 and over, should check their skin every three months. With a bit of practice, most people can check their whole body in 15 minutes.

How to check your skin for skin cancer

- You will need to undress completely and use a well-lit room.
- If you are checking your own skin, use a full length and a hand-held mirror.
- Make sure you check your entire body as skin cancers can sometimes occur in parts of the body not exposed to the sun. This can include soles of the feet, between fingers and toes and under nails.
- Check your:
 - Head, scalp, neck and ears: take an extra close look around the nose, lips, ears and scalp.
 - Torso: front, back and sides.
 - Arms, hands, fingers and nails: remember to look at the spaces between the fingers and the beds of your fingernails.
 - Buttocks, legs and feet: remember to check between toes, under toenails and under the soles of feet.

What am I looking for?

The common symptoms of skin cancer include:

- A new spot or mole on your skin.
- A spot that is different from other spots on your skin.
- Any crusty or non-healing sores.
- Any spots, freckles or any moles changing in colour, thickness or shape.

If you notice any of these symptoms or any other unusual changes tell your doctor, clinic nurse or Aboriginal health worker.