



STAY SUN-SAFE THIS SUMMER TO AVOID SKIN CANCER

Australians must not be complacent about the dangers of sunburn over the summer season, AMA President, Dr Michael Gannon, warned today.

“As we enter the holiday season, and people spend more time at our parks, pools, and beaches, it’s critical to heed the warnings about the dangers of skin cancer and exposure to ultraviolet radiation,” Dr Gannon said.

“It’s been said time and time again – Australia is the skin cancer capital of the world.

“The statistics are frightening – two in three Australians will be diagnosed with skin cancer by the age of 70, and each year more than 2000 Australians die from skin cancer.

“Yet the latest figures from the Cancer Council are alarming. The 2017 National Sun Protection Survey found that the proportion of adults protecting themselves from the sun has dropped from 19 per cent to 17 per cent over the past three years.

“Even more disturbingly, the survey shows that 17 per cent, or more than 2.7 million Australians, will get sunburnt over a weekend.

“It’s important to get the balance between a bit of sun and protection against skin cancer right. A bit of exposure to sunlight is good for your health, but it has to be limited and definitely not during the hottest hours of the day.

“You do not need prolonged exposure to the summer sun to maintain sufficient vitamin D levels.

“Sunscreen is essential in summer, but it is not a shield. Wearing clothing that protects you from the sun is the best form of protection, in conjunction with using approved sunscreen.

“Always protect babies and young children from the harsh Australian summer sun, and this means making children wear sunglasses and protective clothing.

“If you’re working outdoors over the summer season, wear protective clothing, sunglasses, and hats. Melanomas do not care about fashion.

“And if you do notice a change to your skin, or have any concerns, visit your GP to have it checked out.

“Skin cancers are almost always removed, but early detection is important, and prevention is far better than treatment.”

Simple tips to avoid sunburn and skin cancer

- Wear protective clothing;
- Always apply water-resistant sunscreen SPF 30 or higher at least 20 minutes before going outside, and reapply every two hours;
- Wear sunglasses that comply with Australian and New Zealand standards;
- Wear a broad-brimmed, bucket, or legionnaire-style hat;
- Reduce outdoor time, particularly during the hottest time of the day;
- Stay in the shade; and

- If possible, have your car windows tinted.

Background

- Skin cancer occurs when skin cells are damaged, often by over-exposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun.
 - There are three main types of skin cancer – basal cell carcinoma, squamous cell carcinoma, and melanoma.
 - Sunburn causes an estimated 95 per cent of melanomas – the most deadly form of skin cancer.
 - According to the Cancer Council, skin cancers account for about 80 per cent of all new cancer diagnoses, and the majority are caused by exposure to the sun.
 - GPs see more than one million patient consultations for skin cancer every year.
 - In 2014, 2067 people died from skin cancer in Australia – 1467 from melanoma, and 600 from non-melanoma skin cancers.
 - Cancer (all types) costs more than \$4.5 billion in direct health system costs every year.
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