

# LET'S **Talk Health** SERIES

## SUN Awareness

### Skin spots to watch

#### Melanoma

- The most deadly form of skin cancer. If untreated can spread to other parts of the body.
- Appears as a new spot or an existing spot that changes colour, size or shape.
- Has an uneven, smudgy outline and will be an irregular mix of colours.
- Can appear on skin not normally exposed to the sun.



#### Nodular melanoma

- Develop quickly – early treatment is important to prevent spread to other parts of the body.
- Look different from common melanomas – they are raised from the start and even in colour.
- Many are red or pink and some are brown or black.
- They are firm to touch and dome shaped.
- After a while they begin to bleed and crust.



#### Squamous cell carcinoma

- Not as dangerous. A thickened, red scaly spot that may bleed easily, crust or ulcerate.
- Appears on skin most often exposed to the sun.
- Grows over some months.
- More likely to occur in people over 50.



#### Basal Cell carcinoma

- Most common and least dangerous form of skin cancer.
- Red, pale or pearly in colour, appears as a lump or dry, scaly area.
- May ulcerate or fail to completely heal.
- Grows slowly, usually on the head, neck and upper torso.



#### Solar keratoses or sunspots

- A warning sign you are prone to sun damage and skin cancer.
- Red, flattish scaly dry skin that may sting if scratched.
- Appear on areas of skin most often exposed to the sun, like hands and face.
- Most common in people over 40.



Each year skin cancer costs the Australian health system almost \$500 million and claims more than 2000 lives. 2 in 3 Australians will be diagnosed with skin cancer by the age of 70. It is estimated that approximately 200 melanomas and 34,000 other skin cancer types per year are caused by occupational exposures in Australia. Skin cancer is such an avoidable cancer, yet Australia remains the world's skin cancer capital.

#### Stay out of direct sunlight in between midday and mid afternoon

- **UV radiation is reflected** by sand, glass, water, snow and ice and it is also carried by wind, so be mindful; it doesn't have to be a 35-degree day to get burnt
- **When you know you are highly exposed, cover up**, apply 30+ sunscreen and wear a hat
- **Know that your sunscreen will take at least 15 minutes to sink in** and begin protecting you, so apply well before you head out or jump in to that ocean! And reapply often (every 2-3 hrs depending on the

quality of your sunscreen, make sure you read the label as they all vary)

- **Be sure to get your moles/freckles checked every year** to two years depending on your skin type

Ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun has both beneficial and harmful effects on human health. A balance is required between excessive sun exposure which increases the risk of skin cancer and enough sun exposure to maintain adequate vitamin D levels. Vitamin D is essential for bone and musculoskeletal health.

Production of vitamin D from exposure of the skin to sunlight is influenced by a number of factors including age, skin colour, latitude, season and time of day, making it difficult to provide advice to the population as a whole. With these considerations in mind, recommendations for the general Australian population is to minimise the risk of skin cancer while maintaining adequate vitamin D levels. Given the considerable evidence showing UV to be carcinogenic, skin cancer prevention in Australia must remain as a high health priority. For this reason, extended and deliberate sun exposure without any form of sun protection when the UV Index is 3 or above is not recommended, even for those diagnosed with vitamin D deficiency.

# Protect your Skin

During summer in Australia, all states experience long periods during the day when the UV Index is 3 or above. During these periods, a combination of sun protection measures is recommended when outdoors for more than a few minutes. In summer, most Australian adults will maintain adequate vitamin D levels from sun exposure during typical day to day outdoor activities.

Stay protected with these tips:



**SLIP:** cover as much skin as possible. Long pants and shirts with a collar and long sleeves are best. Use a clothing fabric with high ultraviolet protection factor (UPF) rating.



**SLOP:** Use plenty of sunscreen (SPF 30+) and re-apply every two hours, or more often, when sweating. Choose sunscreen that is broad spectrum and water resistant.



**SLAP:** Wear a brimmed or bucket hat to protect your face, head, ears and neck.



**SEEK:** Stay in the shade, out of the direct sun. Avoid sun exposure between 10am and 3pm.



**SLIDE:** Wear sunglasses with good UV protection to protect your eyes. A close fitting, wrap around style is best.

## Sunscreen facts

### HOW TO APPLY

Apply sunscreen liberally – at least a teaspoon for each limb, front and back of the body and half a teaspoon for the face, neck and ears.

### WHEN TO APPLY

Apply 20 minutes before going outside, to allow it to bind to your skin, and reapply every two hours, in case it has been wiped or washed off.

## The Sun Smart Quiz

- Which country has the highest skin cancer incidence rate in the world?  
.....
- How long does it take for your sunscreen to sink into your skin and begin protecting you?  
.....
- Elevated body temp, muscle cramps, headache, decrease urine output, and very dark colored urine, loss of appetite and dry skin and mouth are all signs of what?  
.....
- What can you add to your water to help improve your water absorption?  
.....
- Avoid sun exposure between which time during the day?  
.....
- Name the following Skin Spots....



a. ....



b. ....



c. ....

ANSWERS: 1. Australia, 2. 15mins, 3. Dehydration, 4. Lemon or mint, 5. 10am - 3pm, 6. Melanoma, Basal cell carcinoma, Nodular melanoma