



Your Health Matters!

Sun Smart and Skin Cancer Prevention

By Angela Kwok, your pharmacist

Cunderdin Pharmacy

Australia is famous for its beautiful sun and beaches but it comes with a cost:

Australia has one of the highest rates of skin cancer in the world (2-3 times higher than Canada, US and UK).

Two in three Australians will be diagnosed with skin cancer by the age of 70, with skin cancers accounting for about 80% of all new cancers diagnosed in Australia each year. Research shows that using solariums or tanning beds before age of 25 boosts the risk of melanoma by 59%.

Skin cancers can be divided into **Melanoma and Non-melanoma cancers**. Excluding non-melanoma skin cancer i.e. Basal Cell Carcinoma (BCC) plus Squamous Cell Carcinoma (SCC), melanoma is the 3rd most common cancer in Australians and the most common cancer in Australians aged 15-44 years.

Sun exposure causes around 99% of non-melanoma skin cancers and 95% of melanoma skin cancers in Australia and sunburn is a major risk factor for developing melanoma. In addition to causing sunburn to the skin, sun exposure can also cause burns to the eye, which can lead to cataracts (clouding of the lens); pterygium (tissue covering the cornea) and cancer of the conjunctiva or cornea.

Melanoma: account for only 1-2% of skin cancers but it is the most dangerous and aggressive form of skin cancer as it can grow quickly, appears anywhere in the body and spreads to other parts of the body if left untreated. Unlike normal freckles or moles that have smooth edges and even colour, melanoma has irregular edges or surfaces with different colours through it.

Melanoma Skin Cancer Detection: Use the ABCD

Asymmetry	Border	Colour	Diameter
If the spot or lesion is divided in half, the two sides do not match up	A spot with a spreading or irregular edge	Blotchy spots with number of different colours such as black, blue, red, white and/or grey	A spot that is growing bigger, changing in size and diameter

Protect Yourself in Five Ways from Skin Cancer:

1. Slip on protective clothing
2. Slop on SPF 30 + or higher sunscreen
Sunscreen should **NOT** be relied upon as the only form of sun protection as **NO sunscreen provides 100% UV protection** - use it in combination with protective clothing, hats and sunglasses.
3. Slap on a hat: It should provide as much shade as possible to your face, head, neck, ears and eyes.
4. Seek shade: staying in the shade is one of the most effective ways to reduce sun exposure, but remember that other sun protection measures (clothing, hats, sunglasses and sunscreen) should also be used to avoid reflected UV radiation.
5. Slide on sunglass: It can protect your eyes against UV radiation.

Notes on Sunscreen:

- It should have **Sun Protection Factor (SPF)** of at least 30 + or higher
- It is labelled 'broad spectrum' - means it will filter both UVA and UVB radiation
- It is water resistant - less likely to be washed off by water activities or sweat

How to apply sunscreen:

- Apply sunscreen 15- 20 minutes before going outdoors to clean, dry skin
- Layer sunscreen onto exposed skin rather than rubbing it in
- Apply sufficient amount: use more than half a teaspoon to each arm, face, neck and at least one teaspoon to each leg, front, back and body. Coloured sunscreen can help indicate missing spots
- Reapply every two hours or more often if in water, sweating or towel drying
- Remember your lips (a common skin cancer site). Zinc or lip balm will provide longer lasting protection than cream

Useful Websites:

<http://www.sunsmart.com.au> (Sun Smart Program) <http://www.cancer.org.au> (Cancer Council Australia)

<https://www.cancerwa.asn.au> (Cancer Council Western Australia)

For more information about Sun Smart and Skin Cancer Protection, talk to your **doctor or pharmacist**

