

Media Release

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The Australasian College of Dermatologists



Absent-minded teens – exposed and burnt reveals new Cancer Council research

Main reason for getting sunburnt - “I forgot to protect myself”

Teens continue to put themselves at unnecessary risk of skin cancer by spending excessive time in the sun and forgetting to protect themselves, according to new Cancer Council research.

Findings from the Cancer Council’s National Sun Protection Survey released today show teens spend an average of two hours (1hr 51mins) in the sun during peak UV, with almost a third who get sunburnt saying they “forgot” to protect themselves.

Announcing the results to launch National Skin Cancer Action Week (16-22 Nov) – www.cancer.org.au/skincancerweek, Cancer Council Australia CEO, Professor Ian Olver, said that while the research showed adults were behaving more responsibly and burning less, teens weren’t absorbing the SunSmart message as effectively.

“One in four teens is still getting sunburnt on a typical summer weekend, compared with just 14% of adults,” Professor Olver said. “Adults are clearly getting the message, but we need to more effectively target younger people.

“More than 430,000 Australians get skin cancer and 1600 Australians die from it each year, yet most skin cancer is preventable simply by being SunSmart.”

Chair of Cancer Council Australia’s National Skin Cancer Committee, Craig Sinclair, said fewer teens were deliberately seeking a tan, but were still spending too long in the sun without adequate protection. “Fewer adults are outdoors during peak UV (down from 73% in 2003-04 to 67%), but teens are still out in large numbers (82%),” Mr Sinclair said. “Only 4% wear a wide-brimmed hat, compared to 24% of adults.

“Twenty per cent of teens who had attempted a tan agreed that media reports about Vitamin D caused them to be in the sun more without protection, in order to get enough Vitamin D.”

Australasian College of Dermatologists Honorary Secretary, Dr Stephen Shumack, said skin cancer in young people was more common than thought. “We regularly see the effects of sun damage in young people, with patients in their 20s requiring disfiguring treatments at times.”

Survey results, including state/territory breakdowns at: www.cancer.org.au/sunsurvey

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