

Media Release

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Failure to monitor highlights cancer risk

Michael Clarke joins Cancer Council to launch new research

New research released today (27/10) has found almost half of adult Australians (46%) think it 'likely' they will develop skin cancer, yet many still fail to regularly check their skin for potential cancers.

In the past 12 months, 40% of men and 36% of women did not check their skin or have a GP, friend or family member check for potentially life-threatening cancers.

The research also found that more than three million Australians (23% men and 15% women) rarely or never used sun protection while outdoors in the summer sun.

Chair of Cancer Council Australia's Public Health Committee, Craig Sinclair, expressed concern at the findings and said with more than 430,000 cases and 1700 deaths each year from skin cancer, Australians needed to protect themselves from UV radiation and be aware of changes to their skin.

"Australia has one of the highest skin cancer rates in the world, with melanoma in men continuing to rise," he said. "Two thirds of skin cancer deaths are males and 97% are aged over 40, so men in particular need to monitor their skin."

Australian Cricket's Twenty-20 captain and Test vice captain, Michael Clarke, has had three skin cancers removed from his face. Clarke urged Australians to be proactive about protecting and monitoring their skin.

"Playing cricket means I am outdoors during peak UV times, so I try to protect myself and keep an eye on my skin for any changes," he said. "I was lucky my cancers were so visible, but they can be anywhere on the body, so it is critical to be vigilant."

Dr Phillip Artemi, from the College of Australasian Dermatologists, said: "The best defence against skin cancer is an aggressive offence. Protecting yourself in the sun and checking for changes to your skin can be lifesavers. If you notice an unusual mole or spot, speak to your GP or dermatologist as soon as possible."

Cancer Council recommends that people use a combination sun protection steps when the UV Index is 3 or above - broad-brimmed hat, sunscreen, protective clothing, sunglasses and shade.

Cancer Council has also launched a community service announcement featuring Michael Clarke which can be viewed at <http://www.youtube.com/cancercouncilaust>

Media contacts

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About the survey

Conducted for Cancer Council Australia by Galaxy Research on the Galaxy Omnibus (17-19 Sep), interviewed 1052 respondents aged 18 and above across Australia, representative of the population against ABS data.

National Skin Cancer Action Week

Cancer Council's National Skin Cancer Action Week runs 21-27 November, 2010.