



Spring into sun protection

With springtime temperatures soaring and UV levels bordering on 'very high', the Australasian College of Dermatologists (ACD) has issued a warning for all Australians to heed sun safety advice, especially given that Australians have the highest rate of skin cancer in the world.

Exposure to the sun's ultraviolet rays is the single biggest risk factor in developing skin cancer – Australia's most common form of cancer – which affects up to two thirds of Australians during their lifetime.

ACD Honorary Secretary, Dr Stephen Shumack says that in many parts of Australia, significant UV levels will occur before the start of summer, well before many people may start to heed the SunSmart messages 'Slip, Slop, Slap, Seek and Slide'.

"UV levels are usually high during spring, but because temperatures are often cooler, many people may not think to take the usual sun safe precautions," says Dr Shumack.

"UV light can cause dangerous skin damage, leading to skin cancer, which can kill."

More than 374,000 Australians are treated for skin cancer each year, and alarmingly, the deaths of more than a 1,000 Australians a year are due to skin cancer, many of which are preventable through simple measures.

"With summer just around the corner, it's important to apply SPF 30+ broad spectrum sunscreen every day, about 20 minutes before going out in the sun, and re-apply every two hours," says Dr Shumack.

"Avoiding the sun in the middle of the day, staying in the shade wherever possible, and wearing protective clothing, including a hat and sunglasses, are very easy actions anyone can undertake to protect themselves from increasing their risk of developing skin cancer.

"Prolonged moderate sunlight exposure and a history of severe sunburn - especially in childhood and adolescence - are major risk factors for skin cancer.

"Since our chances of getting burnt or having prolonged sunlight exposure are just as high during spring as during summer, it's important to practise sun safety every day."

2 October 2008

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