



Back to basics to protect against the sun

Australians' sun protection behaviour should begin with the very basics, including re-arranging schedules to avoid exposing themselves to sun in the hottest part of the day, and choosing clothing wisely, according to speakers at the Australasian College of Dermatologists' 42nd Annual Scientific Meeting on the Gold Coast.

Dr Gillian Murphy, Ireland's foremost skin cancer dermatologist, emphasised the fact that sun protection begins with behaviour such as trying to avoid time outdoors in the middle of the day when this could be changed to the middle of morning or afternoon.

"Australians should avoid taking their lunch break in the sun between midday and 2pm; rather, they should try to re-arrange their time outdoors to a time when the danger from UV radiation is not as great," says Dr Murphy.

"If you must be outside during the high UV hours, seek out shade as much as possible to obtain the most protection."

Australasian College of Dermatologists Honorary Secretary Dr Stephen Shumack says that while the sun safe behaviour message is not new, Australians continue to ignore warnings about the danger of UV radiation.

"The rate of skin cancer is not decreasing, with almost 400,000 skin cancers treated in Australia every year," says Dr Shumack.

"We need to continually reinforce the message that Australians should stay out of the sun, wear sunscreen, and follow sensible sun protective behaviour."

Dr Murphy says that choice of clothing is also an important factor when looking at sun protection.

"Clothing made from darker colours, of a tighter weave, and thicker fabrics are best for keeping out UV radiation.

"Stretch fabric should be avoided. To check whether a piece of clothing is giving you any level of sun protection, hold the fabric up to the light. If you can see right through it, it's not as good as thicker or more tightly woven fabric that you can't see through.

"Thin, white, t-shirts, especially when wet, are just about the worst when it comes to sun protection."

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