

News From...



The Australasian College of Dermatologists

A Dangerous Place in the Sun – The Skin Cancer Crisis

Australia's leading professional organisation for the diagnosis and treatment of all skin diseases, the Australasian College of Dermatologists (ACD), has issued a warning about the skin cancer epidemic in Australia.

The ACD warns that Australians have the highest rate of skin cancer in the world. In fact, up to two thirds of Australians will be diagnosed with skin cancer during their lifetime, making it our most common form of cancer.

The spokesman for the ACD, Dr Stephen Shumack, says that more than 200,000 Australians are treated for skin cancer each year, and that alarmingly, the deaths of more than a 1,000 Australians a year are due to skin cancer, many of which are preventable.

"Melanoma is a deadly skin cancer if not treated early, accounting for approximately 70% of these deaths", says Dr Shumack. "The remaining 30% of deaths result from the more common types of skin cancer when they have grown too large and have spread throughout the body."

"Twice as many men die from skin cancer and melanoma than women, attributed to the fact many men do not care about their skin to the same extent women do."

The ACD says exposure to the sun's ultraviolet rays is the single biggest risk factor – particularly sunlight in childhood and adolescence which is a major factor in causing skin cancers.

A history of severe sunburn increases the risk of developing melanoma, and persistent moderate long-term sun exposure increases the risks of both non-melanoma skin cancers and melanoma.

Dr Shumack says melanoma affects people of all ages, but those over 55 face a heightened risk.

With summer just around the corner, the ACD says the following precautions will help all Australians minimise their chances of skin cancer:

- Avoid the sun in the middle of the day (10 am to 3 pm) as much as possible
- Stay in the shade whenever possible
- Wear protective clothing
- Apply SPF 30+, broad-spectrum sunscreen to the skin. Apply it 20 minutes or so before going outside and reapply every two hours whilst in the sun.
- Have regular skin checks by your GP or dermatologist, especially if new and persisting skin spots develop.

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