

SUN PROTECTION

Skin Cancer is by far the most prevalent form of cancer in Australia and our incident rates are the highest in the world. Each year an estimated 270,000 new cases of skin cancer are diagnosed in Australia. The overall cost to the management of skin cancer has been estimated at around \$300 million per year.

The link between skin cancer and ultraviolet radiation (UVR) has been clearly established and by reducing exposure to UVR almost all skin cancers are preventable. The two main types of UVR are:

- UVA: This is freely transmitted through the earth's atmosphere.
- UVB: 15% of UVB transmits through the earth's atmosphere. The other 85% is absorbed by ozone.

UVA and UVB both contribute to sunburn, skin ageing, eye damage and skin cancer.

Protecting Workers

The key components of a sun protection policy can include

- Provide and maintain appropriate clothing and equipment for outdoor workers
- Setting up systems of work to reduce the amount of time workers spend in the sun

Various Forms of Protection

1. Clothing

- Long or ¾ length sleeved shirts with collars to protect the arms and neck
- Shirts in loose weave, lightweight, breathable fabric, loose fitting that allow for air circulation and comfort
- High visibility shirts are recommended to replace standard shirts and safety vests

2. Headwear

- Broad brimmed hats with 8-10 cms brims should be worn at all times..
- If hard hats are worn, brim attachments with neck flaps should be attached.
- Hats should be comfortable and made of close weave material. Hats that have a gauze or mesh section are not suitable, as UV rays will penetrate.

3. Eyewear To Australian Standards AS 1067

- Sunglasses should screen out at least 95% of ultra violet light
- Sunglasses and safety glasses should be glare resistant, lightweight, comfortable and fit closely to the face.
- Wrap-around sunglasses offer the best protection.
- Clip-ons are available for people with prescription glasses.
- Clear lens glasses, which offer UV protection, are also available.
- Hazards such as grinding, gases, chemicals etc should be taken into account when selecting appropriate eyewear.

4. Sunscreen

- Sunscreen does not offer 100% protection and should always be used in conjunction with other protection measures.
- Sunscreen should be labeled broad spectrum to filter out both UVA and UVB.
- Sunscreen should have a sun protection factor (SPF 30+) which filters out 96.7% of ultra violet radiation.
- Sunscreen should be applied liberally to all exposed skin at least 20 minutes before exposure to the sun to allow the skin to absorb the protection chemicals
- Sunscreen should be labeled water resistant and reapplied every 2 hours.

Remember that nearly all skin cancers can be cured if detected and treated early, HOWEVER, PREVENTION IS BETTER THAN THE CURE. Practice of sun-smart procedures and behaviours can prevent skin cancer from occurring in the first place.