

Sun safety fact sheet

Ultraviolet radiation (UVR) is the part of sunlight which causes sunburn and skin damage leading to premature ageing and skin cancer. Damage to the skin occurs as soon as skin is exposed to UVR. Sunburn is the extreme level of this damage. The effects of UVR on skin are cumulative, so damage is building up even without your skin burning.

Skin cancer is a serious disease that can cause disfigurement and death. It can be a lot harder to remove skin cancer than just cutting out a mole.

The majority of skin cancers can be prevented by avoiding exposure to the sun, seeking shade when outdoors, wearing clothing that covers your body, wearing a broad brim hat, wearing sunglasses, and applying SPF30+ sunscreen.

The more time you spend outdoors unprotected the more you put yourself at risk of developing skin cancer.

Sun Safety and Sunscreen

Sunscreens contain chemicals that either absorb or reflect ultraviolet radiation (UVR), which would otherwise burn and damage the skin.

It is recommended to use sunscreen on unprotected exposed areas of skin. But remember that sunscreen is your skins' last line of defence from the sun, and use it in conjunction with other forms of sun protection.

The best type of sunscreen to use is sun protection factor (SPF) 30+, broad spectrum and water resistant. No sunscreen offers complete protection.

There are several different types of sunscreen that you can use. Choose a sunscreen that suits your skin type, and work situation.

Types include:

- cream – is thicker and can be more difficult to spread on skin
- milky lotions – usually contain moisturisers and spread easily
- clear lotion and gel – usually alcohol based, less sticky, tends to dry the skin more, but spreads easily.
- zinc – reflect UVR, and can leave a “sheen” on the skin

Apply SPF30+ broad spectrum, water resistant sunscreen:

- liberally – at least a teaspoon per exposed limb. Don't forget your face, and back of neck.
- to clean dry skin
- 20 minutes before going outdoors (this gives the sunscreen time to work)

Reapply sunscreen at least every two hours when outdoors. Remember to reapply sunscreen in your meal breaks at work.

