

AUSTRALIAN MELANOMA RATES ON THE RISE

Recent analysis of the Victorian Cancer Registry melanoma data from 1985 to 2015 shows that the rate of melanoma continues to increase between 0.5-1 % each year.

This is especially true for males who have an annual growth rate of 1% which means hundreds more Australians will be diagnosed with their first invasive melanoma.

The Australasian College of Dermatologists (ACD) calls on all Australians to sun protect and watch for changes in skin spots that may indicate skin cancer. Associate Professor Chris Baker, President of the ACD says, "Previous research by Australian dermatologists has shown that too many Australians are not using sufficient sun protection. We need to remember the slip, slop, slap, slide and seek shade message. It has been 30 years since the first sun protection campaign. We still have work to do as melanoma rates continue to rise."

A/Prof Baker says, "Alarmingly nearly half of Australians have been sunburnt in the past 12 months. One of the major risk factors for melanoma is sunburning. The other risk factors include a family or personal history of melanoma, having multiple moles and having fair skin and having red hair."

Associate Professor Rosemary Nixon, from the Australasian College of Dermatologists says, "One reason for sunburning, is lack of awareness that it is ultraviolet (UV), not heat, which burns the skin. This is especially relevant in cooler southern Australia. Thus a mild January day in Tasmania may be associated with high rates of sunburn, as the UV levels are very high at this time of the year. The solution is to access UV levels for locations all over Australia, through downloading a free app to your smartphone."

Whilst sunscreen remains the sun protection for most Australians, 85% don't know how much to apply to give themselves the sun protection factor (SPF) protection on the label. Many people do not apply enough sunscreen to the skin. Roll-ons or sprays, while convenient, may not deliver enough sunscreen to the skin.

A/Prof Nixon says, "Sunscreens are classified as chemical or physical. Physical sunscreen, such as zinc or titanium dioxide, sits on the outside of the skin and reflects and blocks the UV from getting into the skin. It acts as a barrier layer, and is effective against a broad spectrum of UV. Chemicals, on the other hand, absorb particular wavelengths of UV light. Most good quality sunscreens are a combination of both chemical and physical sunscreens which work together to provide the best protection."

We are in the height of summer and still in school holiday mode. It only takes a few minutes before you go out to have sun safe fun outside with your loved ones.

A/Prof Nixon says, "Wearing protective clothing, a hat and sunglasses and applying sunscreen before being active outdoors is still the best way to protect your skin from the sun. The message is out there because it works."



Despite recent medical advances in the management of advanced metastatic melanoma, prevention of melanoma by sun protection remains the best medicine. Up to 95% of melanoma cases are caused by UV exposure which means that proper sun protection behaviours are vital.

A/Prof Baker says, “Finally, diagnosing melanomas early is really important. “Check your skin and your partner’s skin on the first day of every new season. See your GP if you have concerns about new or changing spots. And if needed, get your skin checked by a qualified dermatologist and make sure that possible melanomas are detected early and treated before they become advanced.”

References:

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For further information on the ACD, visit www.dermcoll.edu.au, or see our updates on [Facebook](#) or Twitter at [@DermatologyACD](#) #Dermatology

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About the Australasian College of Dermatologists (ACD):

The ACD is the peak medical college accredited by the Australian Medical Council for the training and professional development of medical practitioners in the specialty of dermatology. They provide authoritative information about dermatology to the general public.

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