

MEDIA RELEASE

Australian men urged to reduce their risk of skin cancer with new research showing they are less likely than women to use sun protection

National Skin Cancer Action Week™ 2022

This Sunday, 20 November marks the start of National Skin Cancer Action Week™, and Cancer Council Australia in partnership with the Australasian College of Dermatologists, is urging Australians to be SunSmart to help reduce their risk of developing skin cancer.

Often called our ‘national cancer’, Australia has the highest rate of skin cancer in the world, with approximately two in three Australians diagnosed with skin cancer during their lifetime. In addition, it is estimated that almost twice as many men as women will die from melanoma this year alone (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2022).

Despite melanoma incidence and deaths being higher among men than women, new research commissioned by Cancer Council and released today shows that less than half (49%) of Australian men regularly seek shade to protect themselves from the sun during summer, and less than a third (29%) regularly use sunscreen.

Cancer Council Australia’s Director of Cancer Control Policy, Megan Varlow, noted that the new research reinforces that Australians, particularly men, aren’t protecting themselves on a daily basis.

“Not only does our research indicate that Australian men aren’t being safe in the sun, it also shows that almost half (47%) of men often or always spend time outside during peak UV hours throughout summer. This tells us that more needs to be done to remind people of the easy steps they can take to reduce their risk of skin cancer every day,” she said.

President of the Australasian College of Dermatologists, Dr Clare Tait, noted the importance of reminding all Australians about the ways in which they can minimise over-exposure to UV radiation, which causes 95% of melanomas. She also noted the importance of all Australians regularly checking their skin, and for anyone who has concerns, to visit their GP who may refer them to a dermatologist.

“Sadly, skin cancer claims the lives of over 2,000 Australians every year. Yet, there are steps we can take to protect ourselves from the sun and reduce our risk of skin cancer. Fortunately, most skin cancers can be prevented by using all five forms of sun protection – Slip, Slop, Slap, Seek and Slide.

“We know that every region across the country is likely to reach extreme levels of UV over the summer months, so it’s important to remember to always check the UV index before you head outside and use all five forms of sun protection whenever the UV index is three or above,” she added.

Retired teacher John Clements knows just how dangerous the sun can be, having had multiple skin cancers diagnosed since his 50th birthday. He has received treatment to remove skin cancers from his face, arms, hands and legs at least once a year, for the past fifteen years.

“I grew up in a time where no one knew better. We’d run around on the beach with just our bathers on and would try to get a tan. My life, and that of my two brothers, would have been much better had we covered our skin up.

“I was a bit blasé about my health back in the day, like a lot of blokes. But after my mother was diagnosed with cancer, I went to my GP to get all the checks and got a bit of a shock diagnosis myself. Since then, I’ve learnt to keep on top of my health – I have a GP who I know and trust to look after my skin and I’m quick to take action.

“Now, if I’m out in the sun at all, I make sure to protect myself,” he concluded.

Australians are being reminded to use the five forms of sun protection whenever the UV level is three or above: **Slip** on sun-protective clothing, **Slop** on broad-spectrum, water-resistant SPF 30 (or higher) sunscreen, **Slap** on a broad brimmed hat, **Seek** shade and **Slide** on sunglasses.

National Skin Cancer Action Week™ runs from Sunday 20 November to Saturday 26 November. For more information, visit cancer.org.au.

ENDS

Notes to editor

A cancer diagnosis can be a distressing and overwhelming experience for many Australians and stories about cancer can raise questions or cause anxiety for readers who have been directly impacted by cancer.

We suggest that any content of this nature should direct to a consumer resource for further information or support. Cancer Council Australia recommends the inclusion of the following line within any content:

- *If you or someone you know has been diagnosed with cancer and needs support, please know that help is available. You can contact Cancer Council’s free and confidential support line on 13 11 20 – for practical, emotional and financial support.*

For all media enquiries and interview opportunities, please contact Cancer Council Australia.

media@cancer.org.au

02 8256 4109 (redirects to mobile outside of business hours).

You can check the UV in your local area by downloading the free SunSmart app, or via the Bureau of Meteorology website or app.

About the research

The 2022 Summer Sun Protection Survey (Life in Australia™) was conducted by the Social Research Centre on the January 2022 wave of the probability-based online panel, Life in Australia™. The survey was funded by the Cancer Councils of Australia. In total, 3,194 respondents, representing Australian adults aged 18 years and over, completed the survey between 17 and 31 January 2022.

Key data points

- Almost half (47%) of men reported they often or always spent time outdoors during peak ultraviolet radiation (UVR) hours during summer.
- Less than one third (29%) of men reported using sunscreen (broad-spectrum with SPF 30 or higher) often or always during peak UVR hours during summer.
- Less than half (49%) of men reported often or always seeking shade to protect themselves from the sun during peak UVR hours during summer.
- More than half of respondents (55%) reported being sunburnt at least once during the summer, with the most common activity being during a walk, jog or run (15%).

References

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. (2022). *Cancer Data in Australia*.

Social Research Centre. (2022). *2022 Summer Sun Protection Survey (Life in Australia™) - Analytical Report*. Melbourne, Victoria.

About Cancer Council Australia

Cancer Council Australia is Australia's leading cancer charity, working to reduce the impact of cancer for all Australians. Cancer Council Australia works with its members, the eight state and territory Cancer Councils to:

- Undertake and fund cancer research
- Prevent and control cancer
- Provide information and support for people affected by cancer
- Shape and influence policy and practice

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 Government, the media, other health professionals and the general public.

Dermatologists specialise in the diagnosis, treatment and management of all skin diseases and conditions, including skin cancer. They are extensively trained over four years to differentiate in changes in the skin that may indicate skin cancer and have expertise in skin surgery techniques and



the specific treatment approaches for different tumour types, resulting in improved skin cancer outcomes.