

Welcome Summer – but remember to be sun smart!

Australia has one of the highest rates of skin cancer in the world. Anyone can be at risk of developing skin cancer, though the risk increases as you get older.

The majority of skin cancers in Australia are caused by exposure to UV radiation in sunlight.

Sunburn

Sunburn causes 95% of melanomas, the most deadly form of skin cancer.

In Australia, 1 in 8 adults and 1 in 5 teenagers are sunburnt on an average summer weekend. Many people get sunburnt when they are taking part in water sports and activities at the beach or a pool, as well gardening or having a barbeque.

Sunburn is also common on cooler or overcast days, as many people mistakenly believe UV radiation is not as strong. This is untrue – you can still be sunburnt when the temperature is cool.

Sun exposure that doesn't result in burning can still cause damage to skin cells and increase your risk of developing skin cancer. Evidence suggests that regular exposure to UV radiation year after year can also lead to skin cancer.

Tanning

A tan is not a sign of good health or wellbeing, despite many Australians referring to a 'healthy tan'. Almost half of Australian adults still hold the misguided belief that a tan looks healthy.



Tanning is a sign that you have been exposed to enough UV radiation (from the sun or solarium) to damage your skin. This will eventually cause loss of elasticity (wrinkles), sagging, yellowish discolouration and even brown patches to appear on your skin. Worst of all, it increases your risk of skin cancer.

A tan will offer only limited protection from sunburn, usually equivalent to SPF3, depending on your skin type. It does not protect from DNA damage, which can lead to skin cancer.

Some people who use fake tans mistakenly believe it will provide them with protection against UV radiation. As a result, they may not take sun protection measures, putting them at greater risk of skin cancer.

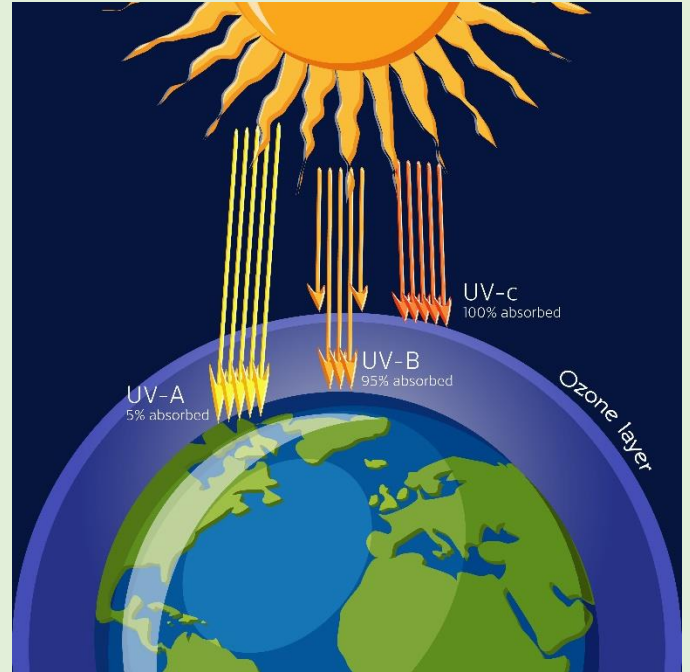
Skin cancer clinics

Usually operated by GPs, skin cancer clinics can offer a variety of services. Some clinics are run by dermatologists.

Skin cancer clinics may not offer higher levels of expertise than your GP, so it is important to look into what services are offered and the training of the staff.

Prognosis for skin cancer

It is not possible for a doctor to predict the exact course of a disease. However, your doctor may give you the likely outcome of the disease. If detected early, most skin cancers are successfully treated.



Preventing skin cancer

Protect your skin

For best protection, when the UV level is 3 or above, we recommend a combination of sun protection measures:

- Slip on some sun-protective clothing – that covers as much skin as possible
- Slop on broad spectrum, water resistant SPF30+ sunscreen. Put it on 20 minutes before you go outdoors and every two hours afterwards. Sunscreen should never be used to extend the time you spend in the sun.
- Slap on a hat – that protects your face, head, neck and ears
- Seek shade
- Slide on some sunglasses – make sure they meet Australian standards.
- Be extra cautious in the middle of the day when UV levels are most intense.



What is skin cancer?

Skin cancer occurs when skin cells are damaged, for example, by overexposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun.

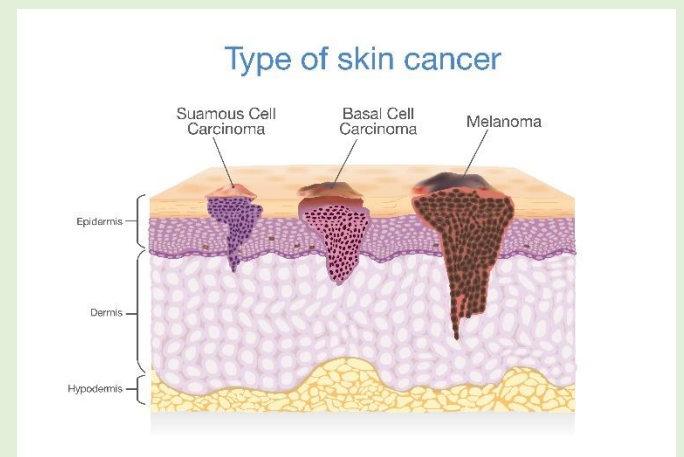


There are three main types of skin cancer:

- basal cell carcinoma
- squamous cell carcinoma
- melanoma, most dangerous form of skin cancer

Both basal cell carcinoma and squamous cell carcinoma are known as non-melanoma skin cancer.

Approximately, two in three Australians will be diagnosed with skin cancer by the time they are 70. Non-melanoma skin cancer is more common in men, with almost double the incidence compared to women.



Skin cancer statistics

Every year, in Australia:

- skin cancers account for around 80% of all newly diagnosed cancers
- the majority of skin cancers are caused by exposure to the sun
- GPs have over 1 million patient consultations per year for skin cancer
- the incidence of skin cancer is one of the highest in the world, two to three times the rates in Canada, the US and the UK.
- In 2015, 2162 people died from skin cancer in Australia, 1520 from melanoma and 642 from non-melanoma skin cancers.



Skin cancer symptoms

The sooner a skin cancer is identified & treated, the better your chance of avoiding surgery or, in the case of a serious melanoma or other skin cancer, potential disfigurement or even death. Become familiar with the look of your skin, so you pick up any changes that might suggest a skin cancer.

Look for:

- any crusty, non-healing sores
- small lumps red, pale or pearly in colour
- new spots, freckles or any moles changing in colour, thickness or shape over a period of weeks to months.



If you think you or someone you know has these skin cancer symptoms, consult a doctor.

Resources:

<https://www.cancer.org.au/preventing-cancer/sun-protection/about-skin-cancer.html>