Sun Safety

Keeping sun safe in the workplace

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What is UV radiation?

Ultraviolet radiation (UV) is produced by the sun. UV rays are invisible so you can't see or feel them; however, regardless of the weather, they are **always there**.

Unprotected exposure to UV radiation injures the cells in the skin and can cause:

- Eye damage and serious eye conditions
- Skin damage, e.g. premature ageing
- Sunburn

UV radiation is also the main cause of **skin cancer.**

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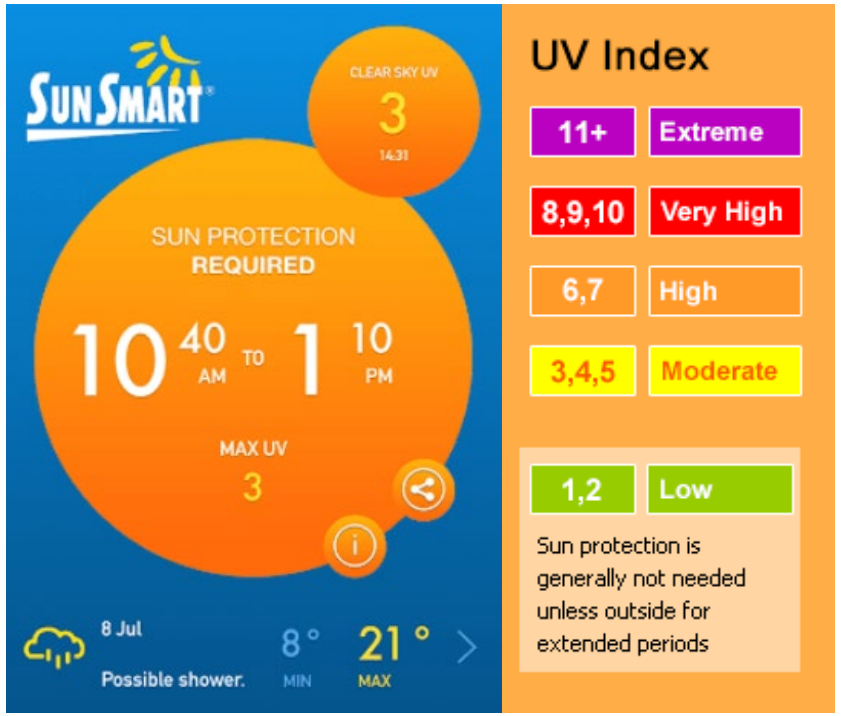
Understanding the UV Index

The UV index is a measure of the intensity of the sun. Sun protection is needed whenever the UV index is ≥3.



The **SunSmart app** is useful for indicating:

- Temperature
- Max UV Index for the day
- Times when sun protection is most required

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What is skin cancer?

Skin cancer develops when skin cells become damaged, e.g. from overexposure to UV radiation.

- UV rays can damage any type of unprotected skin.
- Just **10 minutes** in the sun can cause serious damage to unprotected skin.

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Skin cancer in Australia

- Australia is located close to the equator where sun rays are very intense.
- Consequently, Australia has one of the highest rates of skin cancer in the world

~2 in every 3 Australians will develop skin cancer before they reach the age of 70

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Sunshine in moderation

Excessive sun exposure causes ~99% of non-melanoma skin cancers and ~95% of melanoma skin cancers in Australia.

However, exposure to small amounts of sunlight is also essential for good health.

A balance is required between avoiding excessive sun exposure and achieving enough exposure to maintain adequate vitamin D levels.

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Risk factors for skin cancer

- Working outdoors for part or most of the day
- Frequent sun exposure with no protection
- Skin types which are sensitive to UV radiation and burn easily
- History of severe/blistering sunburns
- Actively tanning or using solariums
- Family history of skin cancer

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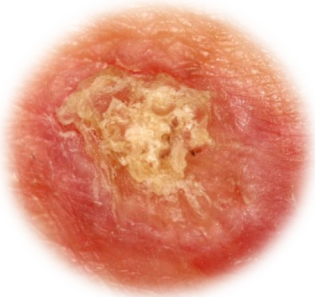
Types of skin cancer

Basal Cell Carcinoma

- Most common type of skin cancer
- Usually found on the upper torso, head and neck
- Small round spots – red, pale or pearly in colour
- Can also look like an ulcer that doesn't heal



Squamous Cell Carcinoma

- Growth occurs over months (doesn't grow rapidly)
- Appears as a thickened red scaly spot – may ulcerate or bleed
- Appears on sites most often exposed to the sun
- May spread to other parts of the body if not treated

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Types of skin cancer

Melanoma

- The least common type of cancer but the most dangerous
- Very aggressive form and develops quickly
- Approximately 95% of melanoma cases can be cured if detected early
- Can occur anywhere on the body and can appear as a new spot, freckle or mole
- Usually has an irregular or smudged outline
- Can appear as more than one colour

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What to look for

Use '**ABCD**' to check your spots:

- **Asymmetry** – one portion of the mole does not match the other
- **Border** – edges are irregular, notched or blurred
- **Colour** – different shades of black, brown or patchy colours
- **Diameter** – spot is six millimetres across or growing larger

If you notice ANY changes, talk to your doctor ASAP.

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Look everywhere

Skin cancer can occur anywhere on the body, even in places usually not exposed to the sun:

- Soles of the feet
- Under the armpits
- In your nose and mouth

When detected early and treated properly, skin cancer is highly curable.

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Protecting your skin

- Minimise direct sun exposure when the UV index is ≥3.
- Limit your time in the sun between 10 am – 2 pm (standard time).
- Sunscreen should be used to complement physical sun protection measures rather than as the sole means of sun protection.
- Sunscreen should be applied in liberal amounts to clean, dry skin at least 20 minutes before going outside.
- Sunscreen should be reapplied every two hours.

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Staying sun safe in the workplace

Outdoor workers in Australia receive 5 – 10 times more sun exposure than indoor workers and are at an increased risk of skin damage and cancer.

Protect yourself by:

- Wearing sunglasses
- Wearing a broad-brimmed hat that keeps the face, neck and ears covered
- Wearing clothes that protect your entire body but also prevent overheating

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Workplace sun protection programs

Employers have the responsibility to provide and maintain safe working environments.

Employees have a responsibility to follow UV protection policies and use the sun protective measures provided.

Employers and employees can work together to:

- Reduce the time outdoor workers spend in the sun
- Maintain equipment needed to protect workers from the sun
- Ensure all staff are well informed, instructed and trained on sun safety

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References

- Cancer Council Australia
- Melanoma Research Foundation
- AIHW Australia's Health 2008 Report

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Thank you

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