

Skin Cancer Prevention

We all enjoy being outside on sunny days; it makes us feel good. However episodes of sunburn and excess lifetime sun exposure are responsible for up to **100,000 NEW CASES OF SKIN CANCER IN THE U.K** every year. Excess sun exposure is also responsible for **wrinkling of the skin** - it soon makes young people look old! It is still possible to enjoy being outside but at the same time to take steps to prevent skin cancer from occurring. These steps are as follows:

1) Use shade

- Shade acts as a natural protection from the sun's rays (UV radiation)
- Staying in the shade is particularly important between the hours of 11am-3pm when the sun is at its strongest
- Babies under the age of one year should always be kept in the shade
- Thin cloud cover does **not** give significant protection from UV radiation

2) Cover up

- A wide-brimmed hat & good quality sunglasses can reduce the UV radiation reaching your face by 50%
- Wear loose fitting clothing – the more skin that is covered, the better the protection
- Holding the material up to the light is a good way to see how much light and UV radiation will get through
- Natural fibres such as linen and cotton are cooler, especially if loose fitting
- Remember that when t-shirts get wet their protection from UV radiation halves
- There are clothes and swimwear (especially for children) which are labelled as UV- protected

3) Use a broad spectrum UVA and UVB sunscreen with an SPF of at least 30

- There will always be occasions when we are out in the sun without adequate shade or cover-up clothing
- On such occasions sunscreen will help protect you from UV radiation
- When you purchase sunscreen look out for the following:
 - ✓ A cream that is **factor 30** or stronger that protects you from UVB radiation
 - ✓ The cream must also be broad spectrum and protect against UVA radiation, such information is sometimes shown on the back of a bottle by a star rating. A **4 or 5 star rating gives the best protection**
 - ✓ The cream should be water resistant
 - ✓ By large bottles of cheaper brands as they are just as effective

- **Correct application** of sunscreen:
 - ✓ Apply generous amounts 15-30 minutes before going out in the sun
 - ✓ Re-apply generous amounts every 2 hours or more frequently if washed, rubbed or sweated off
 - ✓ Put it on before make-up, moisturiser, insect repellent and so on
 - ✓ Never reduce the strength of the sunscreen as the holiday goes on

4) Sunbeds

Sunbeds should be avoided. We now have good evidence showing that they increase the risk of all forms of skin cancer.

5) Vitamin D

- Vitamin D is made in the skin and helps keep us healthy
- **15 minutes of daily sun exposure** (without protection – avoid strong sun so as not to burn) may provide you with enough vitamin D
- If you have limited exposure to the sun it worth supplementing your diet with **foods rich in vitamin D** such as fatty fish (such as salmon, tuna, and mackerel) or cod liver oil capsules. Only small amounts of vitamin D are found in beef liver, cheese, and egg yolks. Some types of milk are fortified with vitamin D (check the label)
- If your exposure to sunlight is very limited we recommend **vitamin D supplements** of 600 IU (international units) a day for those aged 1-70 years and 800 IU a day if aged over 70

For more information –

On the advice and prevention of skin cancer visit:

www.sunsmart.org.uk/advice-and-prevention/

On how to check your moles visit:

www.pcds.org.uk