CHG
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A safe and healthy workplace.

UV EXPOSURE

WHY SUN PROTECTION IS IMPORTANT

Sun ultraviolet (UV) radiation is the main cause of skin cancer, contributing to 99% of non-melanoma skin cancers and 95% of melanoma skin cancers. In Australia, we have one of the highest rates of skin cancer in the world, with two-in-three Australians likely to be diagnosed before the age of 70. However, by increasing our sun awareness and limiting our sun exposure, this can help to protect our skin in the short-term and the likelihood of cancer development in the long-run.

TYPES OF UV RADIATION

UV radiation is a type of energy produced by the sun, that, unlike the sun's light and heat, we cannot see or feel. There are two types of UV wavelengths that reach the earth's surface:

Ultraviolet A (UVA) that penetrates the skin more deeply (contributing to skin ageing and loss of skin elasticity).
Ultraviolet B (UVB) that penetrates the skin more superficially (causing sun burn).

SUN EXPOSURE & PROTECTION

All sun exposure carries risk of skin damage, with a higher potential for exposure that can lead to sunburn and skin cancer. This indicates why conscious and consistent sun protection is recommended from moderate to extreme UV Index ratings, as even short periods outside can lead to harmful amounts of UV exposure; and far more than is required for healthy vitamin D levels. It is important to remember, UV rays cannot be felt, as they are invisible to the naked eye. Hence, UV awareness on cool and cloudy days is just as important as on those that are warm and sunny.

UV & VITAMIN D

- Vitamin D is a hormone in our bodies that controls calcium levels in the blood. It is required to develop and maintain healthy bones, muscles and teeth, and for general good health.
- Our bodies are effective producers of vitamin D when our skin is exposed to UV radiation from the sun; as few foods naturally contain vitamin D.
- Ultimately, exposure to small amounts of UV radiation is essential for good health.
- However, a balance is required to avoid increased risk of skin cancer through excessive sun exposure, and achieving enough, safe exposure to maintain adequate vitamin D levels..

HOW MUCH SUN EXPOSURE DO WE ACTUALLY NEED?

The amount of sun exposure that you need depends on a range of factors, such as: UV level, your skin type and sun exposure through your lifestyle. Australian geographic location, season, time of day and amount of skin exposed to the sun all also impact the amount of UV exposure required to produce adequate amounts vitamin D. Seasonally and locationally, paying attention to the daily UV Index is the recommended approach when deciding how much time is safe to spend outside. The Cancer Council advises that when UV levels are rated 3 or above, most people only need a few minutes of sun exposure each day. A combination of sun protection measures are recommended when UV levels are 3 or above, such as: clothing, regularly applied sunscreen, wearing a hat, seeking shade and wearing sunglasses.

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