

Your Health

It's summertime!

With sunny days upon us, it's good to be aware that exposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun can cause skin damage including sunburn, blistering, skin ageing and, in the long term, can lead to skin cancer. Skin cancer is the most common form of cancer in the UK, with over 50,000 new cases diagnosed each year.

What are the dangers?

- In the short term, sunburn can blister your skin and make it peel, but even mild reddening is a sign of skin damage.
- In the long term, too much sun will speed up the ageing of your skin, but the most serious effect is an increased chance of developing skin cancer.
- Some medicines or contact with some chemicals used at work (such as dyes, wood preservatives, coal-tar and pitch products) and contact with some plants, can make your skin more sensitive to sunlight. Your OH provider or GP should be able to advise you further.

ABCD-Easy

To identify changes that might indicate a melanoma, the deadliest form of skin cancer:

- **Asymmetry:** the two halves of the area may differ in shape
- **Border:** the edges of the area may be irregular or blurred, and sometimes show notches
- **Colour:** this may be uneven. Different shades of black, brown and pink may be seen
- **Diameter:** most melanomas are at least 6mm in diameter. Report any change in size, shape or diameter to your doctor
- **Expert:** if in doubt, check it out! Speak to your GP if you have concerns.

You should take particular care if you have: fair or freckled skin that doesn't tan, or goes red or burns before it tans, red or fair hair and light coloured eyes and/or a large number of moles.

Even if this doesn't apply to you, you should still be particularly careful while you are working outdoors in the summer in the three or four hours around midday (normally between about 11am and 3pm). The sun is most intense at these times, even when it is cloudy.

Sun dos and don'ts

- Try to avoid mild reddening, a sign of skin damage as well as being an early sign of burning
- Try to work and take your breaks in the shade if you can
- Take care when you go on holiday - your skin remembers every exposure
- Get to know your skin's most vulnerable areas, e.g. back of the neck, face and head and keep them covered
- Don't try to get a tan - it's not a healthy sign. It indicates the skin has already been damaged.



Your Health

Heat and sun protection: what else can I do?

- Cover up. Ordinary clothing made from close-woven fabric, such as a long-sleeved workshirt and jeans, will stop most of the UV
- Wear a hat that shades your face, neck and head, the areas that suffer most from sunlight. A safety helmet will provide some shade for the head. A hanging flap can protect the back of your neck
- Take lots of breaks in the shade and keep hydrated; try and stay out of the sun between 11am to 3pm
- If you are indoors, make sure there is plenty of ventilation
- Keep your shirt or other top on, especially while you are working around midday
- Use LOTS of sunscreen of at least SPF 15 (UVB protection) and 4 stars (UVA protection). Apply 20 minutes pre-exposure, after being in the water and wear sunglasses with a CE mark. No sunscreen is 100% effective. Some exposure to sunlight is necessary, however, to avoid vitamin D deficiency and rickets
- Check your skin: look for a small scabby spot which does not clear after a few weeks. Look for changed or newly formed moles or any skin discolouration. As an adult you should pay particular attention to any growths that appear on the face, especially around the nose and eyes, or on the backs of the hands; you should show your doctor any moles that change in size, colour, shape or start to bleed. See our AB-CD-Easy above or speak to your GP/OH department if you have any concerns.

If you are out in the sun or in a hot environment, you can easily get dehydrated. Your body needs about 1.5 to 2 litres of fluid per day (about 8 to 10 glasses) and possibly more when it is hot.

How can I keep hydrated?

Water is best, but if that is too dull, try these tips!

- Add salad to your sandwiches - cucumber, lettuce and tomatoes are packed with water
- Add slices of lemon or lime to your water to make it tastier
- Carry a bottle of water with you and sip when you need it – saves money too!
- Have a fruit smoothie or a glass of fruit juice to make up one of your five a day - and add some crushed ice to add water!
- Try coconut water - it contains lots of rehydrating minerals like potassium
- Tea and coffee are OK but limit these if you can as they will make you pee more
- Same with alcohol - try to limit this as it may affect you more quickly and dehydrate you.

