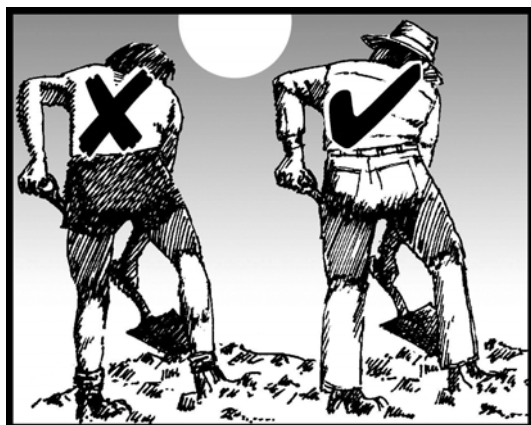


GS 62 PREVENTING SKIN CANCER



ASK YOURSELF:

1. How much of your working life is spent outdoors?
2. At what time of the day do you generally work outdoors?
3. Do you have natural shade areas available?
4. How do you currently protect yourself from the sun?

WHY IS SKIN CANCER A RISK?

Exposure to ultraviolet radiation (UVR) from the sun is the major cause of skin cancers in Australia. Outdoor workers have a high risk of developing skin cancers, as they are continually exposed to ultraviolet radiation.

UV exposure from the sun is greatest between 10 am and 2 pm (11 am and 3 pm daylight saving time) because the sun's rays are more direct. Clouds can reduce the intensity of direct UVR, but sunburn can still occur with cloud cover from scattered and reflected UVR.

WHAT CAN BE DONE TO AVOID SKIN CANCER?

The Occupational Health, Safety and Welfare Act 1986 requires employers to 'provide and maintain so far as is reasonably practicable for employees a working environment that is safe and without risks to health'. Employees are required to **refrain from subjecting their own health and safety to unnecessary risks.**

While burns to the skin are the most common health effect from exposure to the sun, skin cancer is the most serious.

CHANGE THE JOB

In many instances, workers can easily and effectively minimise the risk of skin cancer by making some simple changes to the way outdoor work is done.

- Outside jobs can sometimes be relocated to a shady area.
- A temporary shelter can be erected, or trees and buildings used for protection from ultraviolet rays.
- A shady spot should normally be available for lunch and tea breaks, to keep people out of the sun.
- Another way is to organise the job so that tasks requiring work outdoors get done early in the morning, when the ultraviolet rays are less intense. Between 10 am and 2 pm (11 am and 3 pm daylight saving) ultraviolet radiation is strongest.

This is the most important time to minimise exposure to the sun.

People working in the sun or in shady areas should be protected by suitable clothing and by use of an SPF 30+ sunscreen on any exposed skin.

WEAR CLOTHING AND COVER YOUR SKIN

Skin properly covered by clothes will not need any other protection. Long-sleeved shirts and long trousers or skirts provide the best protection. Here are some useful tips on wearing clothes for protection from the sun:

- Clothes that you can see light through should not be worn. If light is getting through then the ultraviolet rays are getting through as well.
- Long trousers or skirts give more protection than shorts. If shorts are worn, a pair that comes down to the knee will offer more protection.
- Light coloured clothes are cooler in summer, as they reflect the heat.
- Natural fibres such as cotton often allow sweat to evaporate better than artificial fibres.
- A collar on a garment will protect the skin on the back of the neck.

WEAR A HAT AND SUNGLASSES

A hat will keep the sun off the face, neck and ears. It will also protect any bald spots. The skin on your head is one of the places where you can easily get skin cancer. Here are some useful tips on hats:

- Broad-brimmed hats are best. It should have a 10 to 12 cm brim (about 4"–5").
- Wearing sunglasses is recommended to reduce the risk of eye damage. Unfortunately not all sunglasses cut out sufficient ultraviolet light so make sure you use a pair that comply with Australian Standard AS1069.
- A flap on the back of the hat (like the hats of the French foreign legion) will keep the sun off the back of the neck.
- Hard hats can have these flaps attached

USE AN SPF 30+ SUNSCREEN

Use a SPF 30+ broad-spectrum sunscreen. On any unprotected skin. Apply sunscreen liberally (about 0.5-1.0 teaspoon for one arm) to clean, dry skin 20 minutes before going outdoors and reapply regularly at about one hourly intervals if possible. At least reapply at lunch or tea breaks. Keep the sunscreen in a cool, dry place such as with your lunch box

For further information contact:

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CHECK YOURSELF FOR SKIN CANCER

The chances of getting skin cancer are higher for outdoor workers. And if you have been working outside for a number of years and you don't wear a hat and take other precautions, you are increasing your chances of developing skin cancer. ***It's worth having a check to see if you have any skin cancers right now.***

Check the parts of your body most often in the sun, ie. your face, ears, neck, shoulders, arms and hands. Check for:

SUN SPOTS

These rough, dry and firm spots are not skin cancers but they do show that your skin has had an overdose of ultraviolet. Very occasionally, sunspots turn into cancers.

BCC CANCERS (Basal Cell Carcinomas)

This is the most common type of skin cancer. BCCs rarely spread internally. These small, round or flattened lumps are red, pale or pearly in colour and may have blood vessels over the surface.

SCC CANCERS (Squamous Cell Carcinomas)

There are less common than BCC skin cancers but more dangerous, as they can spread. They are red scaly areas that may bleed easily and turn into ulcers. They can look like a sore that doesn't heal.

MELANOMA

Melanoma is the rarest but most dangerous skin cancer. It can be fatal, but nearly all melanomas are cured when treated early.

A melanoma looks like a spot or unusual freckle or mole that changes colour, size and shape over weeks to months. It can be dark brown, black-red or blue-black or a combination of these colours.

Check all over your body for melanoma. It can appear anywhere on your body even areas that have been protected from the sun.

IMPORTANT

If you have a freckle, mole or sun spot which changes shape, colour or size, itches or bleeds or a sore that does not heal – **SEE YOUR DOCTOR!**