

## Employer blog – Cancer

The following health and wellbeing blog has been prepared by TAL for use by employers for their employees. It is available to use in white-label format for communications and is designed to provide information for employees on positive ways to support their physical health.

-BLOG-

### Six misconceptions about skin cancer

With a health condition as common as skin cancer, widespread myths and misconceptions must be quashed to keep Australians safe in the sun and confident in their skin.

Skin cancer is a bigger issue than many people realise. Recent research by life insurer, [TAL](#) found more than half of Australians still acknowledge that they underestimate the prevalence of skin cancer<sup>1</sup> in Australia, so it's clear that there's still more to do to support people in talking about and committing to skin safety.

TAL's General Manager, Health Services, Dr Priya Chagan, helps to set six common misconceptions straight.

#### Myth 1. Sun damage is only possible on sunny days

We hear a lot about being sun aware and skin safe when the weather is warm, which is important, but the reality is that skin safety is important all year around. Vigilance shouldn't become less important when the temperatures begin to drop.

Damage from UV radiation is possible during all seasons of the year, even when it is cool, cloudy, or rainy weather.

#### Myth 2. The higher SPF you apply, the longer you can stay out in the sun

Higher SPF can often create a false sense of security, leading people to think they can stay out in the sun much longer and even skip reapplying their sunscreen. Regardless of the SPF, sunscreen should not be applied to extend the amount of time you spend in the sun.

Sunscreen is not a complete shield from the sun, and it should not be used as the only line of defence against UV. As a general rule, when the UV Index is above 3, The Cancer Council recommends protecting yourself in five ways:

1. by **slipping** on sun protective clothing,
2. **slopping** on sunscreen,
3. **slapping** on a broad brim hat,
4. **seeking** shade when possible and
5. **sliding** on sunglasses.

Sunscreen should be applied 20 minutes before going outdoors so it absorbs into the skin to offer optimal protection. Although some sunscreen is water resistant, no sunscreen is completely waterproof, and it should

be reapplied immediately after swimming. And, if you are in the sun for longer periods, then it needs to be reapplied every two hours.

The SPF included in cosmetics and moisturisers aren't enough to provide adequate sun protection and unless cosmetics are labelled with SPF30 or higher, then additional sunscreen is needed.

### **Myth 3. People with darker skin can't get skin cancer**

It's a common misconception that people with darker skin or those who have already had sun exposure are less susceptible to the dangerous effects of exposure to the sun's UV rays. Although darker skin, including olive-toned skin, does not burn in the sun as easily as fairer skin, the reality is that any exposure to UV radiation can come with risks.

The places on the body where skin cancers tend to occur in people with darker skin are often in less exposed areas such as the soles of the feet, which makes detection more difficult. Because of that, skin cancer is typically diagnosed at a later stage in people with darker skin, which means it is generally more difficult to treat successfully. Regardless of skin type, everyone should be practicing regular skin safety behaviours at any age.

### **Myth 4. Sunscreen is the only form of protection needed to prevent skin cancer**

While sunscreen plays an important role in skin safety, the reality is that skin cancer can occur anywhere on the skin, including places that receive little or no sun exposure.

Prevention isn't enough on its own. It's important to self-check your skin and get regular professional skin checks, particularly if you see changes in your skin. As one of the most easily detectable and preventable cancers, it's so important that these checks become an integral part of everyone's health routine.

### **Myth 5. If you keep an eye on your skin, you don't need to get professional skin checks**

Getting familiar with how your skin looks and developing a regular habit of checking your skin for new spots and changes is key to early detection.

In addition to regular skin-checks, it's important to get regular skin checks by a professional, which is a simple process. The doctor will examine your skin, including areas you may not be able to see. It's quick, easy and could save your life.

Many GPs and skin cancer clinics bulk-bill for their services, while others may charge a fee. Ahead of your appointment, ask about costs and how much is covered by Medicare or your private health fund.

### **Myth 6. Unprotected sun exposure is required to avoid Vitamin D deficiency**

Often dubbed 'the sunshine vitamin', Vitamin D is important for bones, muscles and overall health. People shouldn't sit out in the sun unprotected or deliberately expose themselves to potentially harmful UV with the intention of upping their Vitamin D intake.

Research<sup>3</sup> has found that prolonged sun exposure does not cause Vitamin D levels to continue to increase.

Taking a balanced approach to sun exposure will reduce your risk of skin cancer.

The Cancer Council states that adequate Vitamin D levels are reached through regular, incidental exposure to the sun. When the UV Index is 3 or above (such as during summer), most people maintain adequate Vitamin D levels just by spending a few minutes outdoors on most days during the week.

With 2 in 3 Australians to be diagnosed with skin cancer by the age of 70<sup>2</sup>, it is vital to spread the word about sun safety and skin protection in Australia.

1. THE SURVEY WAS CONDUCTED BY EDENTIFY PTY LTD ON BEHALF OF TAL, IN OCTOBER 2022, WITH A NATIONALLY REPRESENTATIVE SAMPLE OF 1,500 RESPONDENTS IN AUSTRALIA AGED 18-65+ YEARS OLD.
2. CANCER COUNCIL AUSTRALIA

-ENDS-

DISCLAIMER [please add to your post]

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