

## ENGAGEMENT

### Blog – Physical health

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-BLOG-

### Staying Sun-safe

Two in three Australians will be diagnosed with skin cancer by the age of 70, and in around 95% of cases, will be caused by UV radiation. Despite this, new research from our life insurance partner, TAL shows that most Australians are unaware of just how common skin cancer is in Australia, with more than 7 in 10 (72%) believing skin cancer is less common than it actually is.<sup>1 2</sup>

The reason is because much of the sun exposure is 'incidental', taking place during those moments in the day when we're not really conscious of being exposed to the sun. Activities like walking the dog, waiting at a bus stop, driving or even sitting near a window in the office or at home can all result in sun exposure. With 70% of us admitting we don't use sun protection as often as we should, there's a great opportunity to help inform more Australians on how small changes can make a big difference to skin health.<sup>2</sup>

Young people spend more time outdoors, with 18–29 year olds spending more than four and a half hours outside on average a week during the warmer months, making them most at risk of being incidentally exposed to the sun.<sup>2</sup> They are also the least likely to use regular sun protection and get annual skin checks, driving home the need to educate Australians on the importance of daily sun care.

TAL's General Manager of Health Services, Dr Priya Chagan, has three helpful tips on protecting ourselves against incidental sun exposure this summer.

#### **Tip #1. Apply sunscreen every morning**

Rather than just applying sunscreen when out in the sun, it's important to apply first thing in the morning before getting dressed. The most important areas are the face, neck, chest, arms, and legs – any part of the body that is likely to be exposed to sun throughout the day. Remember incidental sun exposure? Sun protection is important, even if you aren't spending planned time outdoors.

Sunscreen takes about 20 minutes to sink into the skin and be effective, so applying before getting dressed ensures you're protected by the time you step out the door to start your day.

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<sup>1</sup> Cancer Council. (2024). *Skin cancer booklet: Everything you need to know*

<sup>2</sup> The survey was conducted by Edentify Pty Ltd on behalf of TAL, in October 2024, with a nationally representative sample of 1,000 respondents in Australia aged 18+ years old.

## Tip #2. Check UV levels

Don't let cloudy skies fool you—UV radiation can still damage your skin, even on overcast or rainy days. While many Australians rely on the weather to decide whether to use sun protection, it's UV levels, not sunshine, that matter most.

TAL SpotChecker research reveals that **70% of Aussies base their sun safety habits on the weather**, not UV readings. In fact, **72% associate sunny days with high UV**, while only **6% use sun protection when it's cloudy or rainy** despite UV rays still being dangerously strong.<sup>2</sup>

UV, or ultraviolet radiation, is the **main cause of skin cancer**, responsible for **95% of all cases**. Even short periods of unprotected exposure during peak UV times (when the **UV Index is 3 or above**) can cause skin damage. And in Australia, UV levels are **typically high (8-10) or extreme (11+) for much of the year**, including in spring and summer.<sup>2</sup>

Protect your skin by checking the **UV Index daily** by checking the [Cancer Council Sunsmart App](#), or your weather app. **Sun protection times** are issued when UV reaches damaging levels. During these times, use **high-SPF sunscreen**, wear **protective clothing, a wide-brimmed hat, and sunglasses**, and seek shade where possible.

Remember: **UV can't be seen or felt**, but it can still harm your skin—so don't let what's out of sight be out of mind. Skin cancer is one of the most preventable cancers, and a few simple habits can help keep you protected.

## Tip #3. Learn how to self-check

Unlike other cancers, skin cancer is one that you can typically see. This can be a new spot or an existing freckle or mole changing size, shape or colour over weeks or months.

Regularly checking your own skin can help to maximise the chance of detecting skin cancer early and greatly increases the chance of successful treatment.

Despite the importance of self-checking in early detection, only 36% of Australians [know how to self-check their skin](#).<sup>2</sup>

If you notice any sore, changing, abnormal or new spots during a self-check, it's important to get these checked by a GP or dermatologist straight away. In addition to self-checking regularly, it is also important to chat to your GP about your risk level of skin cancer and then, when necessary, book a check with [your GP, dermatologist, or a skin cancer clinic](#).

While it is universally recognised that sun safety is important, more than 60% of Australians admit that they often don't think to protect themselves – so it is more vital than ever to spread the word about sun safety and skin protection in Australia.<sup>2</sup>

To learn how to self-check your skin and book a skin check at your local GP, head to [TAL SpotChecker](#). You'll also find stories of everyday Australians who have experienced skin cancer, along with a range of other invaluable resources to help you prepare your family to be sun savvy this summer.

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DISCLAIMER [please add to your post]

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