



Sun-safety myths and facts

Adapted from www.qld.gov.au/health/staying-healthy/environmental/sun/facts

Myth 1: Sunscreen provides enough sun protection

Fact: Sunscreen alone does NOT provide enough sun protection for your skin.

Sunscreen filters ultraviolet light (UVR) and protects from reflected UVR from surfaces like water, sand and concrete. Use SPF 30 or higher broad-spectrum sunscreen for protection against UVA and UVB radiation. Apply 20 minutes before going outside; remember sunscreen wears off and needs to be reapplied regularly—particularly after swimming or excessive sweating—at least every two hours. You need to apply one teaspoon for the face, ears and neck and 1 teaspoon per limb as well as the front and back of the torso.

However, sunscreen is not a suit of armour and needs to be reinforced with protection with shade, clothing, hats and sunglasses.

Myth 2: Skin cancer is a less serious form of cancer because it can easily be cut out

Fact: Skin cancer is VERY serious, especially melanoma.

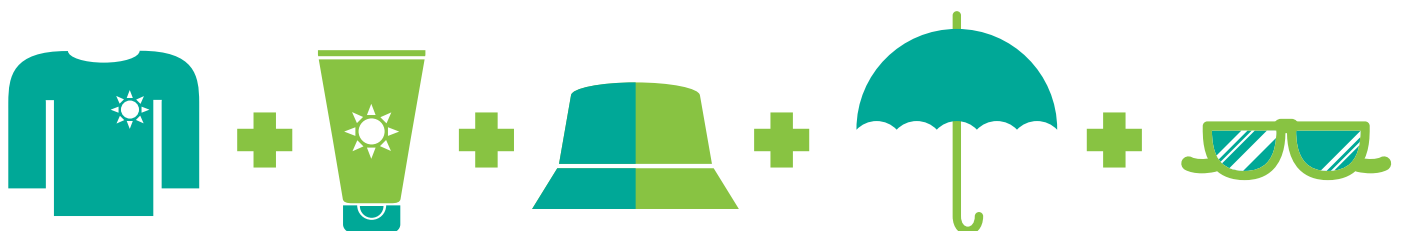
Treatment isn't always as easy as removing a mole:

- The cancer can travel to other parts of the body, making it difficult to treat.
- The removal of skin cancer results in disfiguring scars.

Myth 3: Skin cancer only affects fair-skinned people

Fact: Skin cancer affects people with ALL skin types.

Skin cancer is less common in people with darker skin, but it's often found at more advanced stages.





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FACT
FILE

Myth 4: Skin cancer only happens to older people

Fact: Skin cancer happens to young people too.

Melanoma is the most common cancer in young Australians (15–39 year-olds) making up 20% of all their cancer cases. Melanoma kills more young Australians (20–39 year-olds) than any other single cancer.

Myth 5: Skin cancer is caused by sunburn

Fact: This is not always the case.

According to the Australian Cancer Council website [2018], sunburn causes 95% of melanomas, the most deadly form of skin cancer. However, sun exposure that doesn't result in burning can still damage skin cells and increase the risk of developing skin cancer. Evidence suggests that regular exposure to UV radiation year after year can also lead to skin cancer.

Myth 6: You only need sun protection between 10.00 am and 2.00 pm

Fact: If the UV Index is 3 or above, you need to protect your skin regardless of the time of day.

In some parts of Australia, UVR can reach harmful levels as early as 7 am. Protect yourself whenever the UV index is 3 or above.

Myth 7: Tanning lotions and sprays protect your skin from UVR

Fact: Fake tanning lotions and spray tans do NOT protect your skin from UVR.

They do not contain sun protection factor (SPF).

Myth 8: Using a sun bed is safer than tanning in the sun

Fact: Sun beds are NOT a safe way to tan.

Sun beds can be more dangerous than a suntan:

- Sun beds release UVR just like the sun, but the levels of UVR from sun beds can be up to three times stronger than that of the midday summer sun.
- Adolescents and young people who use solarium/tanning beds have a 75% increased risk of developing melanoma.
- As of January 2016, commercial solariums were banned in all states in Australia. ACT has also banned commercial solariums. At that time there were no commercial solariums operating in the Northern Territory.

Myth 9: You need sun exposure for vitamin D

Fact: Most people get enough UV exposure to maintain adequate vitamin D levels through their usual outdoor activities.

It is unsafe to seek extra sun to top up vitamin D levels. Seek advice from your doctor if you are concerned about your vitamin D levels.

Myth 10: You only need sun protection on hot, sunny days

Fact: It doesn't matter if it's sunny, cloudy or raining—UVR is always present during daylight.

The ultraviolet index (UVI) provides a consistent international measure of the sun's ultraviolet strength. It measures UVR on a scale of 1 to 11 and beyond. The higher the number, the stronger the radiation and the faster the skin will burn. In some parts of Australia—for example, Queensland—the skin can be sunburnt in as little as 10 minutes during summer.

You are at risk of skin damage when the UV Index is 3 or above.

In some parts of Australia you need to use sun protection strategies every day.

There are many factors that influence when sun protection is necessary. One of them is the distance from the equator. The table below gives broad indications of when sun protection may be necessary.

| Latitude | Sun protection may be needed |
|---|------------------------------|
| 30°N to 30°S—all of Queensland and the Northern Territory, Western Australia north of Kalgoorlie, New South Wales north of Coffs Harbour, South Australia north of Lake Torrens | All year |
| 30°S to 40°S—Western Australia south of Kalgoorlie, New South Wales south of Coffs Harbour, South Australia south of Lake Torrens, all of Australian Capital Territory and Victoria | August to May |
| 40°S to 50°S—all of Tasmania | September to April |

UV INDEX

| | |
|------|-----------|
| 11+ | EXTREME |
| 8-10 | VERY HIGH |
| 6-7 | HIGH |
| 3-5 | MODERATE |
| 1-2 | LOW |

PROTECT YOURSELF IN 5 WAYS

-  Slip on sun-protective clothing.
-  Slop on SPF 30+ sunscreen. Reapply every two hours.
-  Slap on a broad-brimmed hat.
-  Seek shade.
-  Slide on wrap-around sunglasses.

