

Be SunSmart

Australia has one of the highest rates of skin cancer in the world. SunSmart recommends a five-step approach to protect your skin during sun protection times, when the UV level is 3 or above.

There's more to sun protection than sunscreen. Protect yourself in five ways:



Slip on sun-protective clothing



Slop on SPF30 or higher broad-spectrum, water-resistant sunscreen



Slap on a broad-brimmed hat



Seek shade



Slide on wrap-around sunglasses

Check the sun protection times each day on the free SunSmart app. Find out more at sunsmart.com.au/app

Be SunSmart in Australia with the free SunSmart app



For more information visit sunsmart.com.au

Image provided courtesy of Queensland Health

2017



10 myths about sun protection



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MYTH 1

It is not possible to get sunburnt on cloudy or cool days.

False You can get burnt on windy, cloudy and cool days, as ultraviolet (UV) radiation can penetrate clouds, and may even be more intense due to reflection off the bottom of the clouds.

Don't wait for sunny weather to protect your skin. Check your local sun protection times each day on the free SunSmart app or at bom.gov.au/uv, or check current UV levels at arpansa.gov.au

MYTH 2

If your cosmetics contain sunscreen, you do not need to use sunscreen.

False Foundations and moisturisers that contain sunscreen do offer protection from the sun's UV but not for the whole day – for example, a cosmetic with SPF30 will only be effective for up to two hours.

To ensure continued protection you will need to reapply sunscreen every two hours and use other sun protection throughout the day. Be aware that most cosmetic products offer protection that is much lower than the recommended minimum of SPF30.

MYTH 3

If you were sunburnt or didn't use sun protection when you were younger, it's a waste of time trying to protect your skin now.

False While excessive exposure to the sun's UV rays in the first 10 years of life doubles your lifetime risk of melanoma, sun exposure later in life also counts.

You can reduce your risk of skin cancer at any age, whether you are six, 16 or 60, by using good sun protection behaviours.

MYTH 4

If you wear SPF50, you can stay out longer in the sun than you can with SPF30.

False No sunscreen is a suit of armour and sunscreen should never be used to extend the amount of time you spend in the sun.

Though it may seem like there is a big difference, SPF30 and SPF50 sunscreens offer very similar protection if the sunscreen is applied correctly and re-applied every two hours, or more frequently after swimming or sweating.

An SPF30 sunscreen blocks 96.7% of UVB radiation, while an SPF50+ sunscreen blocks 98%. SunSmart recommends using a sunscreen that is at least SPF30. You should also choose a product that is labelled broad-spectrum, which means it will also block more than 90% of UVA radiation.

MYTH 5

Using fake tan means you don't need sun protection.

False Some fake tanning products may include a high SPF sunscreen, but these provide protection for a maximum of two hours after application.

Protection does not last for the length of the tan, so sun protection is still required.

MYTH 6

People need plenty of sun exposure to avoid vitamin D deficiency.

False From mid-August to the end of April, most people only need a few minutes of sun exposure mid-morning or mid-afternoon for their vitamin D needs.

From May to mid-August in Victoria sun protection (with the exception of sunglasses) is not recommended, unless you are near highly reflective surfaces such as snow, work outside for extended periods, or if UV levels reach 3 or above. During these months, Victorians are encouraged to be outdoors around midday each day, with some skin exposed to the sun.

MYTH 7

You don't have to be worried about skin cancer because if it happens you will see it, and it is easy to treat.

False Skin cancer treatment can be much more serious than having a lesion 'burnt off'. It can include surgery, chemotherapy and can result in permanent scarring. Melanoma can also spread to other parts of your body and can result in death.

Use sun protection and check your skin regularly. Visit your doctor immediately if you notice any changes. Remember, prevention is always better than cure.

MYTH 8

Only sunbathers get skin cancer.

False Many people get UV damage when they are not deliberately seeking a tan. In Victoria, we can be exposed to high UV levels during all sorts of daily activities, such as working outdoors, gardening, running, walking the dog or having a picnic.

UV exposure adds up over time, and increases our risk of skin cancer.

MYTH 9

If you tan but don't burn, you don't need to bother with sun protection.

False If your skin turns brown, it is a sign of sun damage, even if there is no redness or peeling. It's your skin's way of trying to protect itself because UV rays are damaging living cells.

Tanning without burning can also cause premature skin ageing and skin cancer. All Victorians need to slip, slop, slap, seek and slide during the daily sun protection times.

MYTH 10

You can't get burnt in the car or through a window.

False Glass reduces, but does not completely block, transmission of UV radiation, so you can still get burnt if you spend a long time in the car or behind a window when the UV is high.

More commonly however people are burnt in cars with the windows down, where they can be exposed to high levels of UV radiation.