

# Sun and UV at School

## Factsheet

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### Skin cancer: the statistics

#### General

- Australia has one of the highest rates of skin cancer in the world.
- Two in three Australians are likely to be diagnosed with skin cancer by the age of 70.
- Overexposure to ultraviolet radiation (UV or UVR) causes about 95 per cent of melanoma skin cancers and 99 per cent of non-melanoma skin cancers in Australia. Skin cancer is highly preventable.

#### Australian youth

- High sun exposure in the first 10 years of life more than doubles melanoma risk.
- Painful sunburns before the age of 20 are associated with a 1.4 times increased risk of melanoma, 1.5 times increased risk of squamous cell carcinoma, and 1.6 times increased risk of certain basal cell carcinoma subtypes.
- Melanoma is the most common cancer affecting young Australians aged 15-24.
- Secondary school students (aged 12-17) have high rates of sunburn compared with the adult population.
- 43% of secondary school students in NSW were sunburnt twice or more in 2017.
- 26% of secondary school students in NSW believe that they have little chance of getting skin cancer.
- A tan is not healthy and does not protect the skin from UV radiation, yet 58% of secondary school students in NSW said they prefer a tan and 46% have tried to get a tan in the last year.
- Students aged 12-17 in NSW are more likely than any other age group to get sunburnt and are least likely to wear protective clothing, sunglasses, or a sun safe hat.
- Secondary school students spend more time in the sun than any other age group and are least likely to protect their skin.

#### Prevention

- Skin cancer is highly preventable.
- It is never too late to protect your skin from UV ultraviolet radiation (UV or UVR) and reduce your risk of skin cancer.
- The easiest way to protect yourself from UV is to Slip, Slop, Slap, Seek and Slide. Never rely on just one measure alone:
  - Slip on sun/UVR protective clothing such as tops that cover the shoulders and chest, preferably with collars, covered necklines, and sleeves as well as longer style dresses and shorts. This also includes rash shirts and board shorts for swimming.
  - Slop on sunscreen which is at least SPF 30+, broad spectrum and water resistant. Apply sunscreen 20 minutes before going out in the sun and reapply it every two hours.
  - Slap on a sun/UVR safe hat which shades the face, neck, and ears such as a bucket, broad brimmed or legionnaire hat. Caps and visors are not recommended as they do not provide sufficient protection.
  - Seek shade from trees, built structures or use portable shade like an umbrella, particularly in the middle of the day when the UV is highest.
  - Slide on sunglasses which meet the Australian Standard AS1067.

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