

Health and Safety

NEWSLETTER



In this issue: Sun protection - Advice for outdoor workers

As an employer you can.....

- pass on this advice to your employees and include sun protection advice in routine health and safety training
- encourage workers to keep covered up during the summer months
- consider scheduling work to minimise exposure
- site water points and rest areas in the shade
- consult with your employees and their safety representatives, take their views into account when introducing any new sun safety initiatives
- ensure sun safety is covered in your health & safety risk assessments

What are the benefits to your company?

- fewer absence days through sunburn
- a healthier and better informed workforce
- a reduced risk to employees of skin cancer from long-term sun exposure

What is the problem?

A sunny day makes most of us feel good, but too much sunlight can be hard on the skin. It is not simply sudden exposure while on holiday that is harmful. Even a tan that has been built up gradually can be harmful to health. A tan is actually a sign that the skin has been damaged.

The problem is caused by the ultraviolet (UV) rays in sunlight. People whose job keeps them outdoors for a long time, such as farm or building site workers, market gardeners, outdoor activity workers and some public service workers could get more sun on their skin than is healthy for them. Such people can be at greater risk of skin cancer. This leaflet provides some basic information to help protect yourself.

Who is at risk?

If work keeps you outdoors for a long time your skin could be exposed to more sun than is healthy for you. Outdoor workers that could be at risk include grounds maintenance workers, market gardeners, outdoor retailer operatives and employees in the leisure industry.



What are the dangers?



In the short term....

Sunburn can blister your skin and make it peel, but even mild reddening is a sign of skin damage

In the long term....

Too much sun will speed up the ageing of your skin, making it leathery, mottled and wrinkled, but the most serious effect is an increased chance of developing skin cancer

Abnormal reactions to sunlight

Some medicines, contact with some chemicals used at work (such as dyes, wood preservatives, coal-tar and pitch products), and contact with some plants, can make your skin more sensitive to sunlight. Your works doctor or family doctor should be able to advise you further. Take this leaflet with you.



Skin at work: outdoor workers and sun exposure

Skin cancer is one of the most common cancers in the UK and the numbers of people who get it is increasing.

Most skin cancers are caused by damage from UV (ultraviolet) rays in sunlight. These cancers could be prevented if we protect ourselves from the sun.

A serious problem

There are over 75,000 new cases of skin cancer diagnosed each year in the UK.

Many cases are not reported so the real number of cases is probably much higher.

The number of cases has almost tripled since the early 80s.

Over 2,300 people die from skin cancer each year in the UK. In fact, there are more skin cancer deaths in the UK than in Australia, even though Australia has more cases of the disease.

Detecting skin cancer



If you have naturally brown or black skin, you are less at risk of skin cancer, although cases do occur. You should take particular care if you have:

- fair or freckled skin that doesn't tan, or goes red or burns before it tans
- red or fair hair and light coloured eyes
- a large number of moles

It is normal for new moles to appear until you are about 18 years old. As an adult you should pay particular attention to any growths which appear on the face, especially around the nose and eyes, or on the backs of the hands.

You may have some moles or dark patches on your skin that are flat or slightly raised. Usually these will remain harmless all your life.

But moles or patches of normal skin that change in size, shape or colour over weeks or months in adult life should be shown to your doctor.

What should I be looking out for?

Get to know your skin and look out for changes. When checking your skin use the ABCD rule to help you remember the warning signs for malignant melanoma

Asymmetry

the two halves of your mole do not look the same

Border

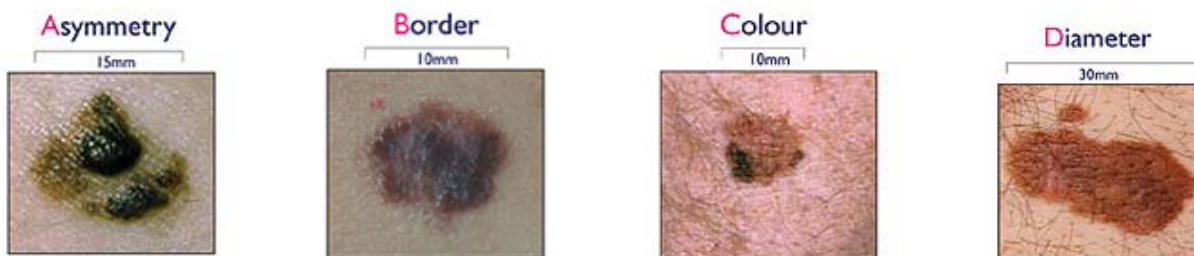
the edges of your mole are irregular, blurred or jagged

Colour

the colour of your mole is uneven, with more than one shade

Diameter

your mole is wider than 6mm in diameter (the size of a pencil eraser)



Other signs of skin cancer

- a new growth or sore that won't heal
- a spot, mole or sore that itches or hurts
- a mole or growth that bleeds, crusts or scabs



The sun protection six-point code



Keep your top on. Clothing forms a barrier to the sun's harmful rays - especially tightly woven fabrics



Wear a hat with a brim or a flap that covers the ears and back of the neck - these areas can easily get sunburnt



Stay in the shade whenever possible, during your breaks and especially at lunchtime



Use a high factor sunscreen of at least SPF15 on any exposed skin. Apply as directed on the product



Drink plenty of water to avoid dehydration



Check your skin regularly for any unusual moles or spots. See a doctor promptly if you find anything that is changed in shape, size or colour, itching or bleeding

Need to talk to us?

If you have any questions please contact a member of the Health & Safety Team on 01225 776655 ext. 513

Need more information?

West Wiltshire District Council's website: www.westwiltshire.gov.uk

Cancer Research UK: www.sunsmart.org.uk