

Keeping Safe in the Sun



Everyone likes to be out in the sun but it is important to protect our skin sensibly to avoid over exposure to harmful UVA rays and also to ensure that our bodies are adequately hydrated to allow natural cooling. The Australian campaign of Slip Slap Slop which was first launched back in 1981 dramatically reduced the number of cases of melanomas (which are a form of skin cancer) in Australia and the facts of that campaign are still used widely today. What does Slip, Slap Slop stand for?

- **Slip** on sun protective clothing that covers as much of your body as possible. The more your skin is covered by clothing, the better the protection you will have. Materials with a close weave will block out the most UV rays. If you hold the material up to the light you will be able to see how much light and UV rays will get through. Wet material is not as protective as dry.
- **Slop** on SPF 15 or higher water resistant sunscreen at least 20 minutes prior to exposure to the sun. Ensure this is reapplied every couple of hours when outside or more often if swimming or perspiring. Also, check the expiry date - if more than two years old throw out and buy new.
- **Slap** on a broad-brimmed hat to shade your face, neck and ears – hats that have flaps around the neck and sides are also ideal for protection from the Sun
- **Seek** to be in the shade especially between the hours of 11 and 4 at the height of the sun's harmful rays – this can be a tree, parasol, canopy or by going indoors. A good tip is to aim to be in the shade if your shadow is shorter than you.
- **Slide** on the sunglasses – look for 'CE' and British Standards Mark as well as those that offer 100% UV protection.



The Sun

Ultraviolet radiation from the sun can cause sunburn, damage the skin and cause skin cancer. The greater the level of UV radiation the higher the risk of harm. For those of you with smart phones there is a free World UV App available which has been developed by the British Association of Dermatologists and the Met Office that gives live UV ratings anywhere in the world. The App gives information and advice about the UV level and ways of protecting yourself dependent on your skin type as well as other tips for staying safe. Why not download it and take a look? It is important to check your skin regularly and look for changes – if you are in doubt seek advice from your GP.



Hydration

Adequate fluid intake at any time is essential and needs to be increased during periods of heat when the temperature is raised. Aim to drink 6-8 glasses of caffeine free drinks per day – alcohol is not a good option as it can make dehydration worse. Too much sun and not enough fluids can lead to sunstroke which is potentially fatal. An easy way to check if you are hydrated is to look at the colour of your urine which should be a pale straw colour – if it is dark then you need to increase your fluid intake.

References and further information from

<http://www.bad.org.uk>

<http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/get-ready-for-summer/relax/sun-safety>

<http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/Heat-exhaustion-and-heatstroke/Pages/Symptoms.aspx>

<http://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/causes-of-cancer/sun-uv-and-cancer/ways-to-enjoy-the-sun-safely>

<http://www.sunsmart.com.au>