



BEAT THE HEAT: ESSENTIAL TIPS FOR SKIN CANCER PREVENTION

Join us this SunSmart Skin Cancer Awareness Month to learn essential tips for preventing skin cancer. Discover the risks of UV exposure, the importance of regular skin checks, and effective protective measures like sunscreen and appropriate clothing. Stay safe while enjoying the sun!

As we enter SunSmart Skin Cancer Awareness Month from December to January, we need to understand the importance of skin cancer prevention. Skin cancer remains a significant health concern, particularly in sunny countries like South Africa, where the risk is elevated year-round. By raising awareness and taking proactive measures, we can protect ourselves and our loved ones from the harmful effects of UV exposure.

UNDERSTANDING UV RISKS

South Africa has one of the highest rates of skin cancer in the world, with melanoma being among the top five cancers for both men and women. The Cancer Association of South Africa (CANSA) highlights that while summer may come to an end, it is crucial to remain sun-smart throughout the year.

The UV rays that contribute to skin damage and cancer can penetrate through clouds and even windows, meaning that protection is necessary regardless of the weather.

REGULAR SKIN CHECKS: YOUR BEST DEFENCE

Regular skin checks are crucial for detecting any changes in your skin that could indicate skin cancer. Take a moment to examine your skin once a month. Look for any new moles or changes to existing ones, such as changes in size, shape, or colour. If you notice anything unusual, don't hesitate to contact a dermatologist for further evaluation.

RECOGNISING EARLY SIGNS

Being aware of the early signs of skin cancer can be a lifesaver. Look out for:

- New moles that appear or existing moles that change in appearance
- Sores that don't heal
- Any unusual patches of skin that itch or bleed



For confidential assistance on physical health matters, contact your

EMPLOYEE WELLNESS PROGRAMME
on toll-free 0800 004 770

SMS your name to 31581

SMART SUN CARE PRACTICES

Implementing effective sun protection strategies is key to safeguarding your skin. Here are some simple yet effective tips:

Sunscreen: Use a broad-spectrum sunscreen with an SPF of at least 30. Apply it generously and reapply every two hours, especially after swimming or sweating.

Clothing: Wear protective clothing, including wide-brimmed hats and sunglasses. Lightweight, long-sleeved shirts can also provide an extra layer of defence against the sun's harsh rays.

Seek shade: Whenever possible, stay in the shade, especially during peak sun hours between 10 am and 4 pm. This will help minimise your exposure to harmful UV rays.

SHEDDING LIGHT ON SUNSCREEN MYTHS

Myth: SPF in makeup is enough protection.

Fact: While makeup with SPF offers some sun protection, more is needed to provide full coverage, as most people apply makeup too thinly to achieve the stated SPF level. For complete protection, apply a dedicated sunscreen under your makeup and reapply throughout the day.

Myth: Sunscreen is only necessary for long periods outdoors.

Fact: Even brief sun exposure can cause damage, especially when accumulated over time. UVA rays, which contribute to skin ageing, penetrate through windows and can affect you indoors. Sunscreen should be applied daily, even if you're only outside for short periods.

Myth: Higher SPF means you don't need to reapply.

Fact: SPF mainly affects how much UVB protection you're getting but doesn't extend how long it lasts on your skin. To maintain effectiveness, all sunscreens should be reapplied every two hours or more frequently if swimming or sweating.

Myth: Sunscreen prevents the body from absorbing enough vitamin D.

Fact: While sunscreen does limit some vitamin D production, research shows that typical use doesn't cause vitamin D deficiency. You can still get adequate vitamin D through diet and brief sun exposure on unprotected skin during non-peak hours.

Myth: Sunscreen isn't necessary in the winter.

Fact: UV rays are present year-round, even on cold, cloudy days. Apply sunscreen daily, regardless of the season, to protect against skin damage and premature ageing.

By understanding the risks, adopting smart sun care practices, and staying vigilant with regular skin checks, you can enjoy the sun safely while prioritising your skin health.

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The information is shared on condition that readers will make their own determination, including seeking advice from a professional. E&OE.



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