

MEDIA RELEASE

9 in 10 Australians don't know when they need sun protection

Sunscreen experts gather in Brisbane

Australians could be unknowingly increasing their skin cancer risk, with new data released by Cancer Council today showing that 40 percent of Australians are still confused about which weather factors cause sunburn. The study also shows that fewer than one in 10 Australians understand that sun protection is required when UV levels are 3 or above.

The release of the new research comes as sunscreen and sun protection experts gather at the Sunscreen Summit, convened by the Australian Skin and Skin Cancer Centre, in Brisbane today to discuss strategies to improve Australians' use of sun protection.

Heather Walker, Chair of Cancer Council Australia's National Skin Cancer Committee said the latest National Sun Protection Survey results showed a clear gap in Australians' knowledge.

"This new research shows that Australians are still very confused about what causes sunburn, which means people aren't protected when they need to be. In summer 2016-17 24 percent of Australian adults surveyed incorrectly believed that sunburn risk was related to temperature, while 23 percent incorrectly cited conditions such as cloud cover, wind or humidity.

"It's important for us to reinforce the message that it's Ultraviolet Radiation that is the major cause of skin cancer – and that UV can't be seen or felt. It's a particularly important message this time of year as we head into the Easter break. In Autumn, temperatures in some parts of the country are cooling, but UV levels right across Australia are still high enough to cause serious sunburn and the skin damage that leads to cancer."

Professor David Whiteman, convenor of the Sunscreen Summit and head of the Cancer Control group at QIMR Berghofer Medical Research Institute, said that despite years of public education, encouraging Australians to protect their skin was an ongoing challenge.

"These findings show that very few Australians know when to protect their skin from the sun's harmful rays," he said.

"This is clearly a concern as it's likely that Australians are relying on other factors, like the temperature or clouds, to determine when they need to slip, slop, slap, seek shade and slide on sunglasses.

"There is overwhelming evidence that, if used correctly, sunscreen prevents skin cancer – yet at the moment many Australians don't even really understand when it's

required, and many are neglecting to use it altogether. We also know from previous research that 85 percent of Australians don't apply it correctly."

"By bringing together Australia's best and brightest sunscreen experts to Brisbane, the Australian Skin and Skin Cancer Centre is hoping to develop new strategies to educate Australians about sunscreen's role in sun protection and find new ways to improve public understanding of how to prevent skin cancer."

Cancer Council's SunSmart app provides local UV alerts and sun protection times and can be downloaded free on the App Store or Google Play.

When UV levels are 3 or above, Cancer Council recommends:

- Slip on protective clothing
- Slop on SPF30 or higher, broad spectrum, water resistant sunscreen
- Slap on a broadbrim hat
- Seek shade
- Slide on sunglasses

The Australian Skin and Skin Cancer Research Centre is a joint collaboration of The University of Queensland and QIMR Berghofer Medical Research Institute.

ENDS

For media enquiries please contact Hollie Jenkins on (02) 8063 4109 (this number is monitored inside and outside of business hours) or media@cancer.org.au

For media enquiries about the Sunscreen Summit contact Brooke Baskin on (07) 3362 0280 or 0427 179 216 or media@qimrberghofer.edu.au

About the National Sun Production Survey

The National Sun Protection Survey was conducted via phone over the summer of 2016-17. Over 3,600 Australian adults were interviewed. Conducted every three to four years by Cancer Council, the survey provides a perspective on changing trends in Australians' sun protection behaviours and rates of sunburn over the past decade.

Adults' knowledge and awareness of the UV Index

Measures most useful for determining risk of sunburn	
UV exclusively	61%
Temperature (any mention)	24%
Other (cloud cover, wind conditions, humidity, any mention)	23%
The UV Index value at which sun protection is required	
UV Index value of 3	8%
Other UV Index Value or can't say response	92%

About the Australian Skin and Skin Cancer Research Centre

The Australian Skin and Skin Cancer Research Centre is a joint collaboration of The University of Queensland and QIMR Berghofer Medical Research Institute.