Britain has never enjoyed the most reliable of summers which is why when the sun comes out, we’re all eager to get outside and make the most of it. But when we Brits are treated to a dose of sunshine, it’s important to take steps to ensure we enjoy it safely.

We all need some sun to help keep our bones healthy, but skin cancer is one of the most common cancers in the UK and the main cause of it is over exposure to UV radiation from the sun or sunbeds.

Getting painful sunburn just once every two years could triple the risk of malignant melanoma, the most serious form of skin cancer, which is why Cancer Research UK’s SunSmart campaign is encouraging everyone to enjoy the sun safely and avoid sunburn this summer.

So, before heading out on the golf course or even just walking around town, think about your skin and the steps you can be taking to cut your chances of developing skin cancer in the future.

It’s a common misconception that the sun in the UK isn’t strong enough to damage your skin. Sunburn can easily happen at home as well as on holiday, and many cases happen when people are not deliberately ‘sunbathing’.

Those who work outdoors are particularly vulnerable to being caught out by sunburn as their skin is being exposed to the sun throughout the day.

Now in its ninth year, Cancer Research UK’s SunSmart campaign provides advice on how best to protect against too much sun in the UK. The campaign highlights the importance of staying out of the sun when it is at its strongest, and that even just a few minutes of sun can lead to skin damage. The campaign also provides information on how to make the most of the sun’s rays to enjoy the benefits that come with it.

The views expressed in On the Soapbox are not necessarily those of Greenkeeper International.

Be SunSmart. Enjoy the sun safely.

The ABCDE Rule

The ABCDE Rule can help you recognise possible signs of skin cancer:

Asymmetry: The two halves of a melanoma may not look the same
Border: Edges of a melanoma may be irregular, blurred or jagged

Colour: The colour of a melanoma may be uneven, with more than one shade

Diameter: Many melanomas are at least 6mm in diameter, the size of a pencil eraser

Evolution: A mole or patch of normal skin that has changed over time

Changes in skin do not necessarily mean something is wrong, and many people have moles or blemishes that will remain entirely harmless throughout their lives. But if you notice change in the size shape or colour of a mole or patch of skin that has happened over weeks or months you should visit your GP to have it checked, even if you don’t think it’s serious or anything to worry about.

While the ABCDE rule is a useful guide, it’s important to remember that not all skin cancers look the same.

Other signs

Other signs which should you see your doctor about include:

• 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

So, keep an eye on your skin and report any concerns to your doctor.

Cancer Research UK recommends keeping an eye on your skin and reporting any changes in the size, shape or colour of a mole or other patch of skin to your doctor without delay.

Cancer Research UK encourages everyone to enjoy the sun safely and facts about skin cancer, visit Cancer Research UK’s SunSmart website, www.sunsmart.org.uk

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