



On the Soapbox

A vehicle for letting people within the industry express their point of view

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 ultraviolet radiation (UV) which, as well as being the major cause of skin cancer, also leads to premature ageing.

Sunburn is a sign the DNA in your skin cells has been damaged and even though the redness will fade, the damage could remain and lead to serious problems in later life, including melanoma.

The most important thing you can do for your skin is to avoid sunburn.

When the sun is at its strongest, spend time relaxing in the shade, cover up with hats, sunglasses and loose, long sleeved clothing, and use at least SPF 15 sunscreen, with a four or five star rating that protects against UVA and UVB rays.

Sunscreen should be applied generously throughout the day to ensure skin protection.

Being SunSmart is not about avoiding the sun altogether, as it is important to spend

some time in the sun for essential Vitamin D. But you only need short exposures to the sun to make enough Vitamin D - which is typically less time than it takes for your skin to redden or burn.

Anyone can develop skin cancer but some people are at greater risk and need to take more care to know how their skin reacts in the sun.

People with fair skin, lots of moles and freckles or a family or personal history of skin cancer should take extra care to avoid sunburn and enjoy the sun safely.

When skin cancer is diagnosed at an early stage, treatment is easier and more likely to be successful.

By getting to know your skin and what's normal for you, any unusual changes will be easier to spot.

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.

moles or blemishes that will remain entirely harmless throughout their lives.

But if you notice a 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 is important to remember that not all skin cancers look the same.

Other signs

Other signs which you should 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

To find out more on how to enjoy the sun safely and facts about skin cancer, visit Cancer Research UK's SunSmart website, www.sunsmart.org.uk.

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



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