



SUNSMART

## Sunsmart campaign hits hard with personal message

**Media release: 21 December 2008**

Melanoma sufferer Lynne O’Keeffe is backing a hard-hitting sun safety campaign which urges parents to protect their children from the sun.

Lynne has experienced first-hand how sunburn as a child can lead to melanoma later in life. She was diagnosed with melanoma earlier this year after a history of sunburn as a child.

“It is vital that people listen to the SunSmart message and understand how deadly skin cancer can be,” she says.

Research shows that one or more episodes of sunburn in childhood and adolescence increases the risk of melanoma in later life, regardless of skin type. That’s why the SunSmart campaign *Never let your child get sunburnt* is urging parents to protect their children from the sun’s ultraviolet radiation.

Lynne was raised in Scotland, and was often sunburnt during family holidays in Europe. Living in New Zealand years later, she found a small spot on her foot.

“I remember sitting on the bed examining the spot with the reading lamp and thinking “you’re a funny little thing”.

The spot turned out to be malignant and Lynne had surgery to remove the melanoma. Now she is extra vigilant with her own three children. “We have a cupboard full of hats and sunscreen. I’ll never see my kids pink ever again.”

Wayde Beckman of the Health Sponsorship Council (HSC) says he hopes others will learn from Lynne’s experience.

“Protecting your child from sunburn is such a crucial message because research strongly links the development of melanoma in later life to childhood sunburn, and we have the ability to prevent that sunburn.

“Everyone knows the drill – during the daylight saving months, especially between the peak UV hours of 11am-4pm when the sun is at its strongest, slip into protective clothing like shirts with collars and longer sleeves; slap on a broad-brimmed hat or cap with flaps; slop on a broad spectrum SPF 30+ sunscreen; wrap on a pair of close fitting sunglasses that reduce at least 90 percent of the sun’s UV rays. And in the middle of the day, try and slip into some shade.

“Using all of these methods will keep your kids safe this summer and help prevent melanoma later in life.”

A television commercial spearheads the *Never let your child get sunburnt* campaign and is supported by radio commercials.

**For more information:**

SunSmart summer campaign: Wayde Beckman, HSC, 027 289 6680

For further information on sun protection and skin cancer go to the SunSmart website [www.sunsmart.org.nz](http://www.sunsmart.org.nz) or the Cancer Society of New Zealand website [www.cancernz.org.nz](http://www.cancernz.org.nz)