



'Think before you burn' people of [region] urged! **SUNSMART**

SunSmart Week 9-15 November

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[Spokesperson] of [organisation] is urging the people of [region] to take care in the sun this summer and think before they burn.

"It seemed winter would never end, and now it has, it's really tempting to get out and soak up the sun. But it is important to remember that New Zealanders are more at risk of sunburn than people in many other countries.

"That's because the sun's ultraviolet rays are much more intense in New Zealand than in the northern hemisphere, and our atmosphere is cleaner which allows even more UV through. It's also cooler here than in places like Australia, so we tend to seek out the sun, rather than the shade.

"Burning often happens early in the season, when people get caught out because temperatures are lower, or at barbecues or social functions where they're outside longer than expected. Sunburn is a big concern, because it is linked to melanoma."

[Spokesperson] says skin cancer is largely preventable yet about 300 Kiwis die every year from skin cancer, most from the deadliest form of the disease, melanoma. [Local figures here if you have them.] Skin cancer is the most common form of cancer in New Zealand and this country has among the highest rates in the world.

The message to those living in [region] is simple: slip, slop, slap and wrap.

"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.

"If you have children, make sure they're protected too. As it says in the ads, 'Never let your child get sunburnt'."

[S/he] says ultraviolet radiation (UVR) levels are rising and for many people, exposure to UVR of three or more for longer than 30 minutes is all it takes to get sunburnt.

"You can find out the daily UVR reading for [region] online and in most daily newspapers. The interactive online site also allows people to get personal UV recommendations for their skin type."

In [region], a number of SunSmart Week activities are planned, including:

[local activities here].

For further information on sun protection and skin cancer go to the SunSmart website www.sunsmart.org.nz or the Cancer Society of New Zealand website www.cancernz.org.nz. Local UVR readings are available on www.sunsmart.org.nz (interactive site), and UVI information is also available from www.metservice.co.nz and www.niwa.co.nz.

For more information:

[Local contact details here]

Myth Busters

It's not possible to get sunburnt on cloudy days.

False. You can get sunburnt on cloudy days as some ultraviolet radiation (UVR) penetrates cloud cover. Under partly cloudy skies UVR levels can be high, and even increase, due to reflection from clouds.

The wind burnt me, not the sun.

False. It is UVR from the sun that causes skin to burn. Wind lowers the temperature of the air making it easy to forget that the UVR from the sun is still strong.

I tan easily so my skin is less likely to be damaged.

False. Any exposure to UVR has the potential to cause skin damage. Burning and peeling are signs some damage has already occurred - even if it turns into a tan. The tan you develop won't protect you from the harmful effects of the harsh New Zealand sun.

I can't get sunburnt through glass.

False. Glass reduces but does not block transmission of all UVR. It typically transmits about 10 percent of the UVR. People who spend long periods in a car, or next to a window receiving direct sunlight should use sun protection.

I have had sunburn but now I protect my skin, so I am safe from developing skin cancer.

False. You can't undo any damage that may have already occurred to your skin but you should prevent future sunburn to minimise any further risk.

Sunscreen blocks out the sun.

False. Sunscreen should not be used as a means of staying out in the sun longer. When exposure to the summer sun is unavoidable, sunscreen is the last line of defence to reduce the risk of sun damage to your skin. No sunscreen will completely shield you from the effects of UVR. Many people apply sunscreen at less than the recommended thickness, so reducing its effectiveness.

People with tans or dark skin don't sunburn.

False. If your skin turns brown it is a sign of sun damage – even if there is no redness or peeling. If you tan easily or have dark skin you are still at risk of skin cancer and should use sun protection.

'Burn time' is 20 minutes therefore I am safe in the sun within this timeframe.

False. A time indication for how long it will take your skin to burn is not accurate, so really there is no such thing as 'burn time'. People have different skin types and therefore some burn quicker than others. Refer to www.sunsmart.org.nz to check the daily UV index for your area and get personal recommendations for your skin type.

Suntans are healthy.

False. There is no such thing as a safe or healthy tan. It does not improve your body's ability to protect yourself from the sun. Some exposure to the sun for vitamin D is healthy, but most people get enough vitamin D through normal daily activity – even with sun protection.