

## Tanning, Ageing and Beauty

*Every time you over-expose your skin to the sun or a solarium, you add to your total lifetime dose of ultraviolet radiation (UVR). Over time, this damage adds up. Compare the skin on the back of your hand with the inside of your thigh and you'll see what years of sun has done to your skin. Most of the differences you see—for example, freckles, blotches, wrinkles—are the result of exposure to UV radiation. In fact, even a tan, far from protecting your skin, is a sign of skin damage! Apart from making you look older than you are, over-exposure to UV radiation increases your risk of skin cancer including melanoma.*

### **Tip 1: Keep your skin looking young and healthy**

Obviously, the best way is to limit exposure to the sun (and avoid other sources of UV radiation). A good way is to reduce the amount of time you spend in the sun in the middle of the day—this is the period when UV radiation is at its most damaging.

If you are out in the sun, take a few simple steps to protect your skin and eyes when UV levels reach 3 and above- strong enough to damage your unprotected skin. Use clothing and a hat—preferably one with a broad brim, of at least 7.5 cms or bucket style with a downward sloping brim and a deep crown of at least 6cm. Apply a broad spectrum, waterproof SPF 30+ sunscreen (SPF stands for Sun Protection Factor) to areas that can't be covered by clothing, including your face, neck and arms. Never rely on sunscreen alone—no sunscreen provides 100% protection from UV radiation.

Solariums, just like the sun, emit UV radiation. This means that using a solarium will increase the likelihood of wrinkles, not to mention increase your risk of skin cancer, especially melanoma. Avoid solariums at all cost.

### **Applying sunscreen**

To be effective sunscreen must be applied correctly and combined with other forms of protection.

Apply liberally on all exposed areas of skin before you apply moisturiser or make-up and at least 20 minutes before going out in the sun. This allows the sunscreen to bind to the skin for maximum effectiveness.

Most sunscreens use a moisturiser such as sorbolene as the base for the cream and are easily absorbed. Moisturisers containing sunscreen are also effectively absorbed—look for those with sunscreens of at least SPF 15+ (although preferably 30+) and broad spectrum ones (which protect against both UVA and UVB).

Sunscreen should be reapplied regularly, at least every two hours - or more frequently if it is likely to have been washed or wiped off or if you have been perspiring.

### **Re-applying sunscreen over make-up**

Obviously, re-applying sunscreen over make-up is a little tricky. One way around this is to select a make-up base or powder with a high SPF for the times you plan to be outside for long periods. This way when you reapply your make-up you will also be reapplying your sunscreen.

And don't forget your lips—there are plenty of good lipsticks or lip balms with high SPF ratings. Many cosmetic companies produce a range of products containing sunscreen.

### **Solariums**

Sunbeds emit ultraviolet UVA and UVB. In general sunbeds predominantly emit UVA radiation which is less damaging than UVB radiation when it comes to burning the skin. However UVA penetrates deep into the top layer of skin and causes damage to the lower cell layers. This increases the risk of skin cancer including melanoma, it also causes skin to age prematurely. Other effects include fragility and scarring and in the longer term photoageing. Photoageing includes wrinkling and loss of skin elasticity that is generally irreversible without cosmetic surgery.

Added to this, in recent years, some sunbeds are emitting higher levels of UVB to allow for faster tanning. These machines have the capacity to emit levels of UV radiation up to five or six times stronger than the midday summer sun and are more likely to cause burning as well as deep cell damage.

Over-exposure to UV radiation from the sun and artificial sources is of considerable public health concern. UV radiation plays an important role in the development of skin cancer and cataracts, and suppresses the immune system. Further to this, cumulative UV radiation results in premature skin ageing. For this reason, Cancer Council does not recommend the use of UV tanning devices for cosmetic purposes. The UV radiation to which you are exposed in a solarium just adds to the damage that may be caused by the harsh Australian sun—it will not make it easier or safer to tan in the sun. If you sunburn easily and find it difficult to tan, you won't tan in a solarium either.

### **Fake tans**

Fake tanning products contain synthetic or vegetable dyes that temporarily paint the skin brown. These bind to the skin and come off when dead skin cells flake off. They usually last up to a week, depending on the product.

Generally fake tans offer little protection (if any) from UV radiation. Some brands do include a high SPF sunscreen, but these provide only short-term protection from the time of application, 2-4 hours at most (like sunscreen). The protection does not last for the length of time the tan remains on the skin.

While a fake tan may be a 'safer' alternative to sunbathing, Cancer Council ACT does not encourage it. Australia's high rates of skin cancer are at least partially due to the once popular but misguided belief that a tan is healthy and attractive. Promotion of fake tans simply perpetuates these beliefs.

If people do opt for a spray 'fake' tan then it is very important to remember that a combination of the 5 sun protection measures will still be necessary to avoid sun burn and long term skin damage.

### **Is sun protection recommended during winter in the ACT region?**

Our bodies require small amounts of exposure to ultraviolet radiation in sunlight to make sufficient quantities of vitamin D. During the months of June and July in Canberra, the levels of ultraviolet radiation are very low – even in the middle of the day. For this reason, Cancer Council ACT does not recommend the use of hats or sunscreen during June and July.

People who may need to continue sun protection in the winter months include those people with highly sun-sensitive skin; a history of skin cancer; outdoor workers and skiers etc

For more information contact **Cancer Council Helpline on 131 1 20**