

MEDIA RELEASE



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Tassie teens failing to save their skins

Many Tasmanian teenagers are risking skin cancer by spending too much time outdoors without any sun protection.

The Cancer Council's National Sun Protection Survey shows teens spend an average of two hours in the sun during peak ultraviolet (UV) times and almost a third who get sunburnt say they "forgot" to protect themselves.

Announcing the findings to launch National Skin Cancer Action Week (Nov 16-22) Cancer Council Tasmania health promotion coordinator Kay Gunn says one in four teens gets sunburnt on a typical summer weekend, compared with just 14% of adults.

"Adults are absorbing the SunSmart message, but it's clearly not getting through to Tassie teens," Ms Gunn says.

"More than 430,000 Australians get skin cancer and 1600 Australians die from it each year, yet most skin cancer is preventable by being SunSmart," she says.

"Fewer teens are deliberately seeking a tan but too many are spending too long in the sun without adequate protection. Only four per cent of teens wear a wide-brimmed hat compared with 24% of adults."

Ms Gunn says nearly one in five teens who saw media reports about vitamin D say the reports made them think they needed to get out in the sun more without protection in order to get enough Vitamin D.

"People need to be very clear: most Tasmanians get a safe dose of vitamin D during summer with just 10 minutes exposure to unprotected sunshine before 10am or after 3pm. Only in the cooler months do people need more.

"Skin cancer is a clear and present danger and is more common in young people than many think. Unfortunately, young people in their 20s regularly require disfiguring treatments," she says.

For comment please call Kay Gunn on 0408 514 030

ENDS

National Sun Protection Survey 2006-07

Summary of key findings

Sun protective behaviour (previous weekend)	Adults (brackets indicate 2003-04)	Adolescents (brackets indicate 2003-04)
Mean time spent outdoors in peak UV	116mins (118)	111mins (110)
Outdoors more than 15mins in peak UV	67% (73%)	82% (80%)

Sun protection used		
Headwear (hat, cap or visor)	50% (48%)	29% (38%)
Wide-brimmed hat	24% (23%)	4% (5)
15+ sunscreen	37 (33%)	37% (37%)

Areas of body sunburnt	Adults	Adolescents
Face, head, nose or ear	37% (39)	41% (47)
Arms and hands	43% (42)	34% (32)
Chest, stomach, back	22% (20)	28% (27)
Neck	22% (22)	23% (28)
Shoulders	24% (29)	42% (30)

Activity when sunburnt	Adults	Adolescents
Beach, water, pool	17% (20)	39% (32)
Active recreation	13% (11)	20% (15)
Sport	7% (7)	17% (11)
Passive recreation	20% (18)	7% (16)

How people got burnt	Adults	Adolescents
Stayed in sun for too long	Not available (17)	26% (24)
Sunscreen wore off	13% (14)	15% (16)
Forgot to protect	23% (24)	29% (19)
Missed an area when applying	12% (9)	7% (11)
Didn't wear clothes/sunscreen/sun protection	14% (12)	10% (10)

Adolescent sun protection behaviour and sunburn on summer weekends	Adolescents (all)	Boys	Girls
Outdoors more than 15mins in peak UV	82%	87%	76%
Sunburnt either day on weekend	24% (25)	28%	19%

About the National Sun Protection Survey

The National Sun Protection Survey examined people's sun-related knowledge, attitudes and behaviours and sunburn through weekly phone interviews on Monday and Tuesday evenings over the summer of 2006-07. A total of 5085 adults (18-69 years) and 652 adolescents (12-17 years) were interviewed. This is the second time the survey has been conducted (the first was in the summer of 2003-04). The study was funded by Cancer Council Australia and the Australian Government through Cancer Australia.

Shaded cells indicate data released in Feb 2008