

Doctors' Voice

January - February 2015



Skin Cancer – Risk Factors

Common risk factors for skin cancer include having fair skin, having many moles and freckles, a personal or family history of skin cancer, excessive sun exposure and solarium use. Some ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun is important for bone and muscle health, but too much UV can cause sunburn, premature ageing, skin and eye damage and ultimately skin cancer. Protecting skin from over-exposure can help reduce your risk of skin cancer. Australia has one of the highest rates of skin cancer in the world, with two in three Australians developing some form of skin cancer before they reach the age of 70. Each year, over 2,000 Australians die from skin cancer, yet skin cancer is one of the most preventable cancers.

Moles and Freckles and Skin Cancer

Most people have moles and freckles. However, if you have a great number of freckles or moles, you are at higher risk of skin cancer. Moles or freckles that grow, change shape or colour, bleed or ulcerate, or any new spots that appear, should be treated with suspicion. Have your doctor check out any unusual changes to your skin as soon as possible.

Age and Skin Cancer

Melanoma is more common in older adults than younger people, with the average age of diagnosis at 61 years. Although early onset melanoma is comparatively rare, melanoma is one of the most common cancers and the leading cause of cancer death for young Australians. Older adults have had more cumulative sun exposure than younger people, with every additional decade of high sun exposure shown to further increase the risk of melanoma. However, by limiting recreational sun exposure, a person can likely decrease their risk of melanoma whatever their age.

Solariums and Skin Cancer

Solariums tan the skin by radiating it with both UVA and UVB radiation, which are known to be dangerous to the skin. UV radiation from a solarium is three times more intense than the midday summer sun. Research shows that people who use a solarium before the age of 35 have a 59% greater risk of melanoma than those who don't use a solarium. In 2009, the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) listed ultraviolet-emitting tanning beds in its highest cancer risk category. In Australia, many states are banning commercial tanning units and in Victoria, a ban will take effect from 1st January 2015.

Reducing your Skin Cancer Risk – 5 Sun Protection Measures

1. **Slip** – on sun-protective clothing. Make sure it covers as much skin as possible
2. **Slop** – on SPF30 (or higher) broad-spectrum, water resistant sunscreen. Apply 20 minutes before going outdoors and reapply every two hours
3. **Slap** – on a broad-brimmed hat protecting the face, head, neck & ears
4. **Seek** – shade
5. **Slide** – on wrap-around sunglasses

Source: Better Health Channel August 2014

Burns – First Aid Treatment

Burns can be caused by flames, ultraviolet (UV) radiation, hot liquids, electricity, lightning and certain chemicals. All burns require immediate first aid treatment. Partial and full thickness burns require urgent medical attention. Full thickness burns often require skin graft surgery. **First aid for all burns includes holding the burn under cool running water for at least 20 minutes.** Major burns are a medical emergency and require urgent medical attention. In some cases, skin graft surgery is needed.

First aid for burns

Remove the person from danger and further injury. Hold the burn under cool running water **for at least 20 minutes.** If necessary, prevent heat loss by covering unburnt areas.

Burnt clothing should only be removed if it does not stick to the burn. Do not remove clothing that is stuck to the burn.

Chemicals, such as acids and alkalis, must be washed off with **running water for at least 20 minutes** but take care not to splash the chemicals onto unaffected skin, into eyes or onto other people. A cool shower is ideal.

Superficial burns require pain relief, dressings, and regular medical review to make sure they have not become infected.

Do not apply anything other than water to second or third degree burns until they are fully cooled and medically assessed.

Major burns are a medical emergency and require urgent treatment. Immediately apply cold water to all affected areas and call triple zero (000) for an ambulance. A cool or lukewarm shower is ideal.

Source: Better Health Channel July 2014

Doctors' Voice



Travelling with Children

As we head into the summer months, travelling will be on the agenda for many families.

Child Restraints / Booster Seats

Recommendations for using child restraints or booster seats vary with the child's height and age. It is important that the child restraint meets the Australian Design Standards and is fitted properly. This five point checklist will help parents decide when their child can progress to using an ordinary seatbelt:

1. Can the child sit with their back against the seat back?
2. Can the child sit with their knees bent comfortably over the front edge of the seat?
3. Can the child sit with the seatbelt across their mid-shoulder?
4. Does the seatbelt sit comfortably over the child's lap and low across their thighs?
5. Can the child stay in that position for the duration of the trip or does their position change to an unsafe one if they fall asleep, for example?

If these conditions cannot be met then the child cannot safely move out of child restraints in the car.

Going on Holidays – Plan Ahead

Essential to every trip with children, whether long or short, is planning for short attention spans. This means breaking the travel into short trips to allow for breaks. Parents should ensure that each child has their own toys & activities & limit the number of things they need to share.

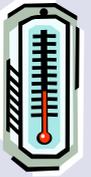
Motion Sickness

Almost half of children experience motion sickness when travelling in a car. Children between the ages of 2-12 years are particularly prone to motion sickness. Motion sickness caused by car travel will usually stop within minutes of stopping the car. Steps to assist in avoiding motion sickness include:

- Keep the head as still as possible – motion sickness is caused by contradictory messages to the brain.
- Encourage children to look outside the car at things that are still, e.g. trees and buildings, not other cars. Their symptoms may ease if they close their eyes.
- Introduce some fresh air, open the window slightly and avoid strong smells in the car.
- Avoid eating fatty foods before getting in the car. Small snacks that are easy to digest, such as dry biscuits and fruit, are best and children should drink plenty of water.
- Play games to distract the child and make them think of other things and look outside the car at stationary objects.
- Plan plenty of stops throughout the journey to give the child the chance to move around.
- If the child complains about any of the symptoms stop the car as soon as possible, so that it doesn't progress to the child vomiting.
- Seek medical advice before purchasing over-the-counter medications.

Source: Community Paediatric Review November 2014: Travelling with Children

Staying Healthy in the Heat



Heatwaves can affect anyone, including the young and healthy. However, some people are more at risk than others. The best way to stay healthy in the heat is to plan ahead for dealing with hot days. If you have concerns about staying healthy in the heat, please see your doctor.

People at higher risk include:

- the elderly or frail
- babies and young children
- people with a disability
- people who have a medical condition such as heart disease, high blood pressure, or who take medications that may affect the way the body reacts to heat
- pregnant women and breastfeeding mothers
- people who have trouble moving around (such as those who are bed bound or in wheelchairs)
- people who work or are physically active outdoors

Actions to take during hot weather to protect yourself and others are:

- Drink plenty of water
- Keep cool
- Stay out of the sun
- Make sure you follow safe food practices – hot weather can spoil food
- Remember that **hot cars can kill** – do not leave anyone in a car who cannot easily and quickly get out by themselves (including pets)

Where to get help for a heat-related illness

- In an emergency, call triple zero (000)
- Your local doctor
- Nurse-On-Call Ph: 1300 606 024 (24 hours)
- Maternal & Child Health Line, Victoria Ph: 132 229 (24 hours)

Source: Better Health Channel July 2014