



Sun Safety for Students

Whole school strategies and community engagement

Schools can play an important role in influencing knowledge, attitudes and behaviours regarding sun safety.

Research

Skin cancer is the most common cancer in Australia. It is also the most costly cancer to the Australian health system.

All people in NSW, regardless of their culture or heritage, are at risk of overexposure to ultraviolet radiation.

It is estimated that 95% of skin cancers can be prevented through reducing exposure to ultraviolet radiation.

Both childhood and adult exposure to UVR contributes to the risk of developing skin cancer.

Children under 12 years of age are a key priority group for sun safety. The risk of developing melanoma and other skin cancers are strongly related to spending childhood in a high UVR environment such as in NSW.

Adolescents generally adopt sun safe behaviours less frequently than adults and it is more challenging to achieve attitude and behaviour changes among teenagers.

Adolescents spend more time in the sun than any other age group. They have been shown to have a high level of knowledge of the dangers of sun exposure yet they engage in relatively fewer sun safety behaviours.

Source:

- NSW Skin Cancer Strategic Prevention Strategy 2012-15. Cancer Institute NSW
- Dobbinson, S and D Hill, Patterns and causes of sun exposing and sun protecting behaviour in preventing skin cancer. Hill D, Elwood JM, English DR, (Eds). 2004, Kluwer Academic Publishers: Dordrecht, The Netherlands.

Considerations for schools

Schools can face challenges in implementing a whole school and community approach to sun safety.

This may include:

- lack of engagement by the wider community with sun safety
- resistance by students to adopt sun safe strategies
- social norms related to the desirability of a tan and to the use of sun safe measures such as hats and clothing

- limitations in the design of existing school buildings and their capacity to incorporate additional shade areas
- lack of understanding about the importance of sun safety.

Strategies that schools may consider to encourage a whole school approach to sun safety

- Develop sun safety messages for adolescents that are engaging and relevant to their daily life.
- Identify key community members who can promote sun safe behaviours and engage with students and the broader school community.
- Develop effective communication strategies to engage families, including those from culturally diverse backgrounds, and the wider community in sun safe behaviours so they can be role models for students.
- Embed sun safe practices in all relevant daily activities.

- Encourage staff to role model sun safe behaviours at all times, when on playground duty, excursions and during outdoor activities.
- Implement Cancer Council's [SunSmart Primary School Program](#).
- Invite representatives from Cancer Council NSW or the Melanoma Institute Australia's Community Speaker's Program to speak at one of the school's professional development days.
- Discuss with the student representative council ways they can publicise and promote sun safe behaviours to the student body.
- Include consistent messages in all school permission notes about the need for appropriate sun safe clothes and hats for students participating in activities under the auspice of the school and during all excursions.
- Remind students at assembly about sun safety.
- Display sun safety posters prominently in key areas around the school.
- Work with the school's P&C Association to raise awareness about outdoor activities that are organised by them such as fetes and walk-a-thons, to ensure that consistent sun safe messages are conveyed to students and the community.
- Include planning for sun safety in the School Plan or develop a sun safe action plan. Communicate the strategies with the school community through appropriate channels and seek feedback. This may include newsletters, annual reports, school website and information provided to parents as part of the school enrolment package.
- Involve representatives from across the school community when reviewing and planning sun safety strategies, including teachers, executive staff, students, parents and other community members.
- Conduct parent and student surveys about knowledge, attitudes and current sun safe behaviour when reviewing sun safe strategies.
- Encourage families to model sun safe behaviours.
- Encourage external providers and visitors to the school to model sun safe behaviour.
- Provide opportunities for staff to access professional learning to raise awareness and to support the inclusion of sun safe principles into their learning and teaching programs across key learning areas.
- Publish articles in the local newspaper about the school's sun safe strategies.

Suggested resources

Cancer Institute NSW campaign materials:

<http://www.cancerinstitute.org.au/prevention-and-early-detection/public-education-campaigns/skin-cancer-prevention>

Posters and promotional materials:

<http://www.cancercouncil.com.au/editorial.asp?pageid=2326>

Sunsmart UV alerts:

<http://www.bom.gov.au/announcements/uv/>

Cancer Institute NSW Dark side of Tanning campaign and UV index information:

http://www.darksideoftanning.com.au/reduce_risk/check_uv.aspx

Cancer Council NSW Information sheets and resources:

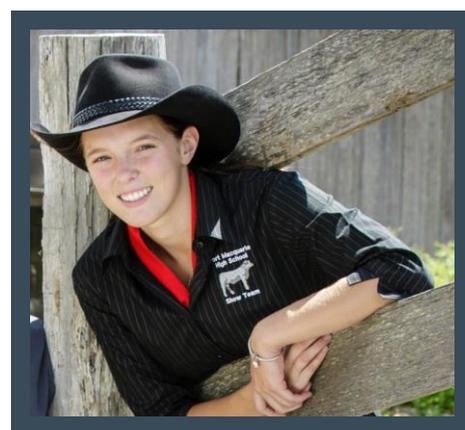
[SunSmart newsletters and excursion inserts for primary schools](#)

Melanoma Institute Australia's Community Speaker's Program
<http://www.melanoma.org.au/get-involved/community-speakers-program.html>

[Add the UV Alert widget to your site](#)

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander resources

<http://www.cancercouncil.com.au/1904/get-informed/about/aboriginal-health/living-with-cancer-3/?pp=63879>



For further information

[Sun safety website](#)

Student Engagement and Interagency Partnerships

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