



Being SunSmart during the winter months and vitamin D

Does your school need to amend its skin protection policy?

“Sensible sun protection does not put people at risk of vitamin D deficiency. But there are times when it’s actually important to leave your hat and sunscreen off.” (Professor Ian Olver, CEO of The Cancer Council Australia)

We recommend that SA schools implement a comprehensive skin protection policy when the ultraviolet radiation (UVR) levels are 3 and above – generally from the beginning of September until the end of April.

If your school still has an all year around skin protection policy you should consider amending your policy to make sure that children are receiving some safe sun exposure during the winter months.

During May to August in South Australia, skin protection is not necessary for most people as UV radiation levels generally fall below 3. On a normal school day from May to August, where children are outside for relatively short periods of time – ie recess and lunch – the chances of skin damage from the sun for most people is low.

When do we need to take extra care in winter months?

- on clear sunny days in early May and late August when the UV may reach 3 and above during the middle of the day
- if children are outside for long periods of time – eg sports day.

On these days, skin protection is still recommended, particularly for children and adults with very fair skin that burns easily.

How can our school find out what the UV level is?

There are two tools that will help you.

- Look for the SunSmart UV alert on The Advertiser weather page or go to www.bom.gov.au/weather/uv. The SunSmart UV alert is issued every day by the Bureau of Meteorology. It tells you the hours when the UV will be 3 and over, so you know that skin protection is needed. For instance, in early May, it may say that protection is needed between 11:30 am and 2:15 pm. During winter months, no times will be given.
- Find out what the UV level is in real time at www.arpana.gov.au/uvindex/realtime/aus_rt.htm. This tells you what the UV is at any time of the day.

How do we get enough vitamin D?

Most people get enough vitamin D if they expose their hands, face and arms to

- **10 minutes** of sunlight **before 10 am or after 3 pm from September to April** and
- **2–3 hours per week** of cumulative sunlight exposure **from May to August**.

"Anyone who thinks they may be vitamin D deficient should seek medical advice, not seek more sun," (Professor Ebeling, Medical Director of Osteoporosis Australia).

What about different skin types?

Children should learn about their own skin type – particularly those with very fair skin, which burns easily – and the importance of skin protection. All children need to protect their eyes from the sun by wearing a hat when the UV is 3 and above.

- Children with very fair skin are encouraged to make skin protection a part of their daily routine all year round.
- Children with dark skin need to protect themselves from the sun as they can still sustain accumulated skin and eye damage.
- Children with very dark skin do not normally need to apply sunscreen because of their high level of melanin. This is a decision for their families to make. It is still recommended that these children wear a hat to protect their eyes and face.
- People with very dark skin need more sun exposure to produce enough vitamin D so it is important that they have some sun on their skin during the winter months

How can we change our policy?

If you want to keep an all year round skin protection policy because it is easier to implement and manage, consider allowing warm hats, such as beanies, to be worn during the winter months. This helps students from getting out of the habit of wearing a hat.

If your policy only operates during 1st and 4th Terms, The Cancer Council recommends it is extended to include the months of September and April. That way, you know students are protected when UV levels are damaging.

In summary

- A comprehensive SA school skin protection policy should be in place and actively implemented from the 1st September until the end of April and when the ultraviolet radiation levels are 3 and above outside of these times.
- It is not necessary to wear hats and sunscreen during winter months (May – August) when the UV is below 3.
- Care should still be taken from May to August if children are outside for an extended period of time on a clear sunny day (eg a sports day).

- People with very fair skin that burns easily should always protect themselves from the sun.
- Other health effects from overexposure to the sun, such as eye damage and immuno-suppression, are independent of skin colour
- Further scientific investigation into the amount of ultraviolet radiation exposure required to ensure adequate vitamin D levels for people of different skin types in Australia.
- Always talk to your doctor if you are concerned about vitamin D levels.

Remember - Australia still has the highest rate of skin cancer in the world so skin protection is very important.

Find out more

The Cancer Council Australia's updated position statement "The risks and benefits of sun exposure" www.cancer.org.au/positionVitD

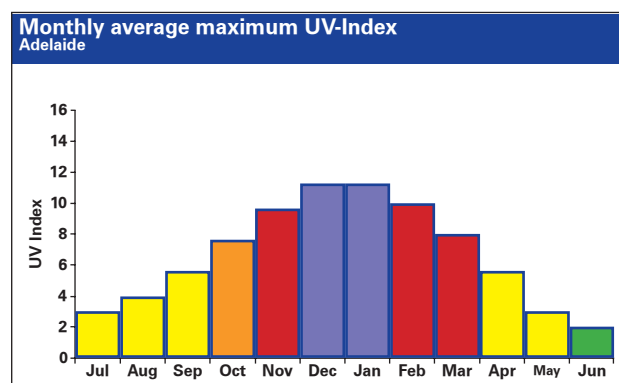
General SunSmart information

- www.sunsmart.org.au
- *The Cancer Council Australia* www.cancer.org.au

UV information

- Bureau of Meteorology www.bom.gov.au/info/about_uv.shtml
- Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency (ARPANZA) www.arpansa.gov.au/uvindex/daily/ausuvindex.htm
- South Australian specific ultraviolet radiation level information www.bom.gov.au/products/IDY05214.shtml
- Real time UVR levels for around Australia www.arpansa.gov.au/uvindex/realtime/ausrealtime.htm

Please note that if you would like to include information about skin protection and vitamin D in your school newsletter it is available from the Primary Schools section of The Cancer Council South Australia's website www.cancersa.org.au.



Source: Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency (ARPANSA)

Pull the Plug on Food Advertising



The Cancer Council is running an advocacy campaign to see junk food advertising targeted at children banned. The campaign is called Pull the Plug on Food Advertising.

Junk food advertising may seem like an unusual issue for The Cancer Council. Our interest in food marketing is because of our concerns about the rising levels of obesity in Australia, particularly in children. Obesity is an important risk factor for some types of cancers, such as breast, colon, endometrium and kidney. Healthy eating and the prevention of weight gain, particularly in children, are key objectives for The Cancer Council. With rising rates of obesity in Australia and the fact that around 50% of obese children are likely to progress to adult obesity, this is a real concern for increased rates of cancer in the future.

There is a lot of debate about how to address the huge problem of childhood obesity. Overweight and obesity is more than just a problem for individuals. We are living in an increasingly "obesogenic" environment. What this means is that unhealthy food choices become the automatic, easy choices, and high energy foods become normalised. Heavy advertising of junk foods only compounds this problem, and studies have shown that food marketing has an effect on children's food preferences, the food they ask their parents to buy (pester power), and the food they ultimately eat.

The food industry has adopted pervasive marketing strategies similar to those used by the tobacco industry, prior to the ban on most forms of tobacco advertising in 1992. Our experience in advocating for less tobacco advertising means we are well placed to contribute to a similar advocacy effort to see better regulations in place for food advertising.

We hope that you will help us with this campaign and sign a postcard, and ask all your friends to sign one too! To send a postcard online and for more information about the campaign, visit our website www.cancercouncil.com.au/pulltheplug.

Please note that the campaign ends on August 17th 2007 so hurry to send in your postcard now!

Join the SunSmart Schools National Program

If your school is not already a registered SunSmart School then this is a good time to join hundreds of other schools across Australia that have already gained SunSmart School status. If your school is doing a great job in providing a sun safe environment for your students and staff, why not become a SunSmart School? It is a very straightforward process. Just answer a questionnaire and send it back in with a copy of your skin protection policy. Your application will then be assessed to ensure that it is in line with the national standard criteria.

Once your school has gained SunSmart status you will receive a large aluminium SunSmart School sign to display in a prominent spot. This lets the wider school community know that the school is committed to providing a sun safe environment for students and staff.

If you would like to become a SunSmart School simply download the application form from www.cancersa.org.au or contact me directly on 08 8291 4149 or by email cmcnamara@cancersa.org.au.

If you haven't updated your skin protection policy in the last two years then now is a good time before spring arrives and ultraviolet radiation levels begin to rise. A SunSmart Primary Schools Checklist can be found on The Cancer Council South Australia's website to help you.

The Cancer Council South Australia's Speakers Bureau

Skin cancer, nutrition and cancer prevention, physical activity information sessions.

Would you like a speaker to come to your school to talk to staff, governing council or parent groups about skin cancer and how to best protect your school community? Skin cancer prevention is a very popular topic and helps school communities to keep up to date with information and available resources.

Our Speakers Bureau has provided well over 350 presentations on a range of topics from skin cancer to nutrition and cancer prevention, early detection and the work of The Cancer Council. There is also another information session available now on physical activity and cancer prevention.

To organise your free presentation, contact the Speakers Bureau Coordinator on 08 8291 4111 or download request forms from the Speakers' Bureau section on the website www.cancersa.org.au.

» Please note that the Speakers Bureau is not available for presentations to students

'TV Food Ads: Educate and Advocate'

This article is by Rita Alvaro
Senior Nutritionist
Centre for Health Promotion
Children, Youth and Women's Health Service (CYWHS)

TV Food Ads – the issue

Australian children watch an average of 2–3 hours of TV per day, and so over a year are exposed to thousands of TV food ads. Studies show that 50–80% of TV food ads shown during children's viewing hours are for high fat, sugar and/or salt foods, such as fast foods, chocolate and confectionery. A review of over 100 studies concluded that food promotion influences what children want to eat, increases their requests for advertised products, and ultimately influences their consumption.

What schools can do

Schools play a very important role in supporting students to develop knowledge and skills to enable them to make healthy choices in life. Exploring TV ads involves analysing messages about food and healthy eating, and reflecting on how this can influence food choices. Hence, teaching and learning about TV food ads can help empower students to make informed choices about the food they eat, and strongly links with critical literacy.

A resource for schools

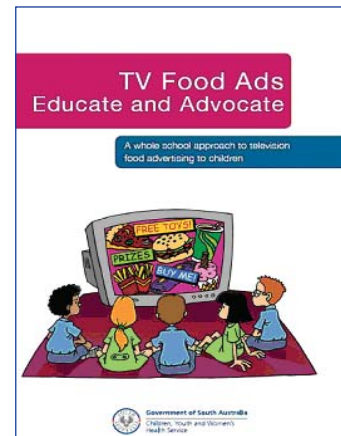
A new resource for primary school teachers, 'TV food Ads: Educate and Advocate' aims to help support students to be critical about TV food ads. Developed by the Centre for Health Promotion, in consultation with teachers and the Department of Education and Children's Services, the resource:

- provides key information about TV food advertising
- contains around 40 curriculum activity ideas which link with a range of learning areas
- suggests ways to reinforce curriculum messages through other school practices, such as within the canteen or fundraising activities, and
- suggests ways to raise awareness about TV food advertising amongst staff and families.

The resource is now available from the Centre for Health Promotion for \$33 + postage and handling.

Workshops for primary school teachers are also being held to support the use of this resource. Upcoming workshops are:

- August 22 – Noarlunga Health Village
- October 31 – Hindmarsh Education Centre.



More information

For more information on:

- the resource or workshops, contact the Centre for Health Promotion on 08 8161 7777.
- TV food advertising to children, visit: www.wch.sa.gov.au/foodadstokids.html.

The Parents Jury



An online network for parents and caregivers.

Have you heard about the Parent's Jury? Pass this information on to your school community, particularly to those parents who are interested in the health benefits of good nutrition and regular physical activity.

The Parents Jury is a web-based network of parents who wish to improve the food and physical activity environments for children in Australia. It is an effective and easy way for parents to voice their views on children's food and physical activity issues. It is also a forum for parents to collectively advocate for the improvement of children's food and physical activity environments. Some examples of this are reduced marketing targeted at young children, more healthy choices for school canteens and making neighbourhoods safer and more child-friendly.

Parents can also nominate and vote for the biannual Parents Jury Awards for people or organisations that affect, positively or negatively, the availability and promotion of healthy food and physical activity choices for children. The Parents Jury is co-ordinated and administered by Diabetes Australia-Vic, The Cancer Council Australia and Australasian Society for the Study of Obesity, which together have a major interest in improving children's nutrition and levels of physical activity, and reducing overweight and obesity in Australia. The increase of overweight and obesity is one of the biggest health threats facing Australian children.

For further information and to join the Parent's Jury go to www.parentsjury.org.au.