

October 2005



Welcome to the last edition of the Primary Schools News Bulletin for 2005. It is hard to believe that the year has gone past so quickly and that it is 4th Term already. This newsletter focuses on SunSmart and skin cancer prevention with a reminder to all schools to ensure that their skin protection policy is current and the appropriate practices are in place. If your skin protection policy hasn't been updated or reviewed in the past 2 years then this should be done as well. If you need any assistance please contact me on 8291 4149 or email cmcnamara@cancersa.org.au

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Join the SunSmart Schools National Program

This is a good time to consider becoming a SunSmart School and 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 straight forward process, involving answering a questionnaire and sending it back 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 a school has gained SunSmart status they receive a large aluminium SunSmart Schools sign to display in a prominent spot. This lets the wider school community know that their school is committed to providing a sun safe environment for its 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 8291 4149 or by email at cmcnamara@cancersa.org.au

When to have a skin protection policy in place

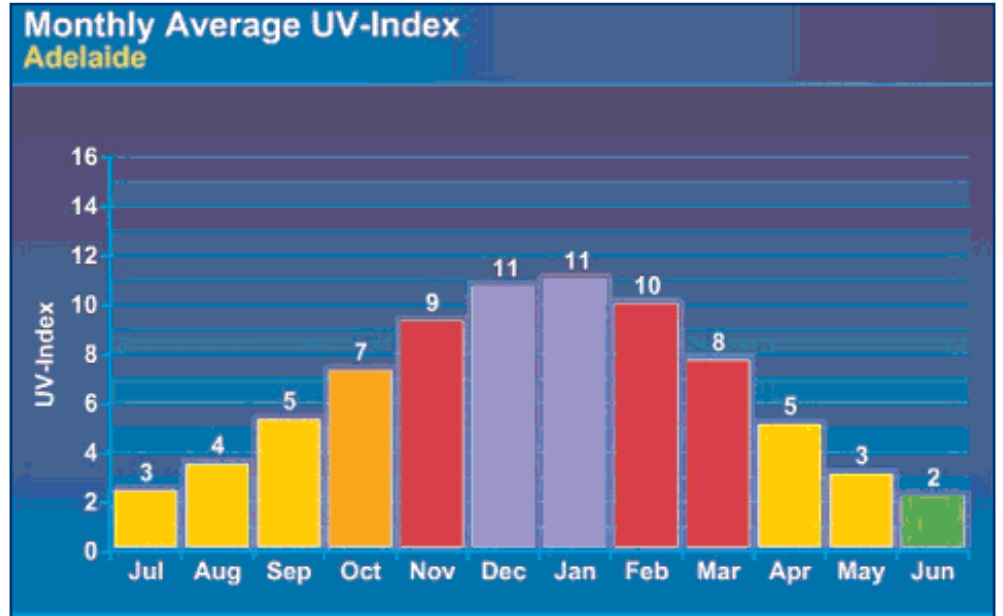
The World Health Organisation recommends that skin protection be used when the ultraviolet radiation (UVR) levels are 3 and above. This is when the UVR levels are strong enough to cause damage to the skin. In South Australia it is recommended that schools and early childhood services have a skin protection policy in place from the beginning of September until the end of April. *It is important to note that if students are outside for an*

extended period of time on a clear sunny day during the other months (May to August), then the skin should also be protected.

Some schools have their skin protection policy in place during the 1st and 4th Terms only and it is highly recommended that they consider extending it to September to the end of April.

To assist with gaining a clearer understanding about UVR and the UV-Index I have included the following information from the Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency or ARPANZA (www.arpansa.gov.au)

Predicted UV-Index for Adelaide, Australia



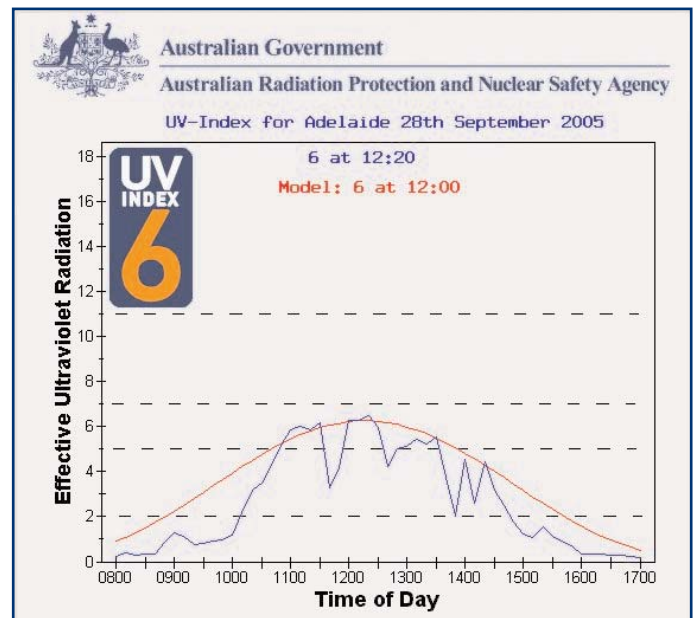
What the UV-Index model means

Over exposure to ultraviolet radiation can cause short term health effects such as sunburn. Long term exposure to ultraviolet radiation can increase the risk of damage to the skin and eyes which may result in skin cancers and cataracts. You can use the UV-Index model as a guide to what levels of solar UV radiation can be expected at different times of the year and what sun protection precautions are appropriate.

The UV-Index value indicates the maximum daily level of ultraviolet radiation (UVR) and is related to UVR exposure as follows:

UV-Index Level	Exposure Category	Precautions
2 or less	Low	You can safely stay outdoors with minimal protection.
3 to 5	Moderate	Wear a hat, sunscreen, sunglasses, seek shady areas between 10 am – 3 pm.
6 to 7	High	Wear a hat, sunscreen, sunglasses, seek shady areas. Where possible stay indoors between 10 am – 3 pm.
8 to 10	Very High	Stay indoors as much as possible, otherwise use all precautions above.
11 or higher	Extreme	Same as previous category above.

The following graph shows the UVR level at midday for Adelaide on the 28 September 2005. The maximum temperature for the same day was 19.3 so it is very important to keep in mind that **UVR levels are not necessarily related to air temperature** and that skin damage can occur on a cooler sunny day.



Graph from the ARPANZA website www.arpansa.gov.au

Ultraviolet radiation and vitamin D

Some people are confused about whether they should get more sun to make sure they get enough vitamin D. The following information explains that you need to protect yourself from the sun because its ultraviolet (UV) radiation puts people at risk of skin cancer. While the sun helps your body produce vitamin D, you only need a little exposure to get the benefit.

How the sun affects our health

The link between exposure to the sun's UV radiation and skin cancer is proven. Australians have been advised to protect themselves from the sun for over two decades.

Vitamin D is needed for strong and healthy bones. People mostly produce vitamin D through exposure to the sun's UV radiation. Recent studies have found that some groups of people who have limited exposure to the sun don't have enough vitamin D. Does this mean that everyone should ignore sun protection messages and go out in the sun more? If not, how do you get enough vitamin D without risking skin cancer?

Australian's are at high risk of over-exposure to UV radiation

Australia has high levels of UV radiation, mainly because the country is close to the equator. Australians are also at risk of skin cancer because they are mostly fair-skinned and enjoy an outdoor lifestyle.¹

UV radiation levels vary through the year. This can depend on:

- the height of the sun (the higher the sun is in the sky, the higher the UV radiation level)
- whether you're in the north or south of the country
- the amount of cloud cover
- the altitude (the higher the altitude, the higher the UV radiation level)
- ozone levels
- UV reflective surfaces (e.g. light coloured concrete, water or snow).

The higher the UV levels, the less time it takes for skin damage to occur. Generally, UV radiation levels are most intense around the middle of the day (10 am – 2 pm or 11 am – 3 pm during daylight saving).

How intense is the sun? Using the UV-Index

The UV-Index (UVI) is a simple way to show the sun's UV radiation intensity. It divides UV radiation levels into low (1–2), moderate (3–5), high (6–7), very high (8–10) and extreme (11 and above). In Australia, the Bureau of Meteorology forecasts the highest UV level for the following day on their website www.bom.gov.au. When the UVI forecast is 3 or above, you need to protect yourself because the UV radiation is intense enough to damage the skin.

How to protect yourself against skin cancer

To protect against skin cancer when the UVI is 3 (moderate) or above:

- use shade wherever possible
- wear clothing that covers as much skin as possible
- wear hats that protect the face, ears and neck
- wear close fitting sunglasses that meet the Australian Standard 1067
- use broad spectrum, water resistant SPF 30+ sunscreen, and reapply it every two hours.

When in alpine regions, or near highly reflective surfaces like snow or water, use sun protection at all times of the year, anywhere in Australia.

Do you need more sun to get enough vitamin D?

Most people receive enough vitamin D simply by going about their day-to-day lives. So you don't need to make a special effort to go outside to increase your 'dose' of vitamin D.

Will sunscreen stop you getting enough vitamin D?

Sunscreen filters out most but not all UV radiation. Regular use of sunscreen when the UV radiation level is 3 (moderate) or more does not greatly decrease vitamin D levels over time.^{2,3,4}

So protect yourself against skin cancer and you will still get enough vitamin D.

Most people are not at risk of low vitamin D

Only some people living in Australia have low levels of vitamin D.⁵

They include:

- the elderly, especially those who do not go outdoors very often. Older people also don't produce vitamin D as well as young people
- babies of mothers who have low levels of vitamin D
- people with dark skin, who naturally have more melanin, the pigment that reduces the amount of UV radiation getting through the skin
- people who cover their skin and heads with clothing and veils, for cultural or religious reasons, so less skin is exposed to UV radiation.

These people generally have little exposure to the sun, especially during winter if they live in the southern half of Australia. This is usually why they may not get enough vitamin D.

People with a diagnosed lack of vitamin D should discuss this with their doctor, as they may need to take vitamin D supplements rather than seek more exposure to the sun.

References

- 1 P Gies, C Roy, J Javorniczky, S Henderson, L Lemus-Deschamps, C Driscoll. "Global Solar UV Index: Australian measurements, forecasts and comparison with the UK." *Photochem Photobiol*, 79, 1 (2004), 32–9.
- 2 R Marks, PA Foley, D Jolley, KR Knight, J Harrison, SC Thompson. "The effect of regular sunscreen use on vitamin D levels in an Australian population. Results of a randomised controlled trial." *Arch Dermatol*, 131, 4 (1995), 415–21.
- 3 J Farrerons, M Barnadas, J Rodriguez, A Renau, B Yoldi, A Lopez-Navidad, J Moragas. "Clinically prescribed sunscreen (sun protection factor 15) does not decrease serum vitamin D concentration sufficiently either to induce changes in parathyroid function or in metabolic markers." *Br J Dermatol* 139, 3 (1998), 422–7.
- 4 J Farrerons, M Barnadas, A Lopez-Navidad, A Renau, J Rodriguez, B Yoldi, A Alomar. "Sunscreen and risk of osteoporosis in the elderly: a two-year follow-up." *Dermatology* 202, 1 (2001), 27–30.
- 5 Australian and New Zealand Bone and Mineral Society, Osteoporosis Australia, Australasian College of Dermatologists and the Cancer Council Australia: *Risks and benefits of sun exposure*. Position Statement 2005.

The Cancer Council South Australia's Speakers' Bureau

Did you know that The Cancer Council can provide a speaker to come to your school to talk to staff and/or parent groups about skin cancer - ranging from prevention to early detection.

Skin cancer prevention is a very popular topic and assists school communities to remain up to date with information and available resources. Speakers are now also available to provide a presentation on nutrition and cancer.

During 2004 our Speakers' Bureau provided over 300 presentations on a range of topics, cancer prevention and early detection and the work of The Cancer Council. This free information service is available to all staff and parent groups.

To book a speaker on skin cancer prevention, nutrition and cancer prevention or any cancer-related topic, please contact the Speakers' Bureau Coordinator on 8291 4111 or download the request form from the Speakers' Bureau section on the website www.cancersa.org.au

Please note that the Speakers' Bureau does not cater for student groups. Contact the Cancer Helpline 13 11 20 for information about student resources.

New SunSmart Schools

Congratulations to the following schools who have gained SunSmart School status:

Mt Pleasant Primary School	Flaxmill R - 7 School
Port Lincoln Primary School	Eudunda Area School
Tatachilla Lutheran College	Athelstone Primary School
Hackham East Jnr Primary School	Port Pirie Special School
Hawthorndene Primary School	Willsden Primary School
St Martin's Lutheran College	The Heights Junior School
Pt Augusta West Primary School	St Pius X School
North Ingle Primary School	Richmond Primary School
Torrens Valley Christian School	St Teresa's School

For cancer information and support contact the **Cancer Helpline on 13 11 20**.

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