

# Secondary schools

## Cancer prevention newsletter



February 2006

### Introduction

Welcome to the first issue for 2006 of the Secondary Schools' Cancer Prevention newsletter. I hope you had a great holiday and are feeling rejuvenated after the break. It has been a hot summer and with UV radiation now at peak levels, it would be very timely to remind staff and students about your sun protection policy. If you need support with planning your policy, please don't hesitate to call me.

This newsletter contains current information about cancer prevention issues, teaching ideas and information about The Cancer Council South Australia's resources. If you have any suggestions or feedback about the newsletter please let me know.

Have a great term.

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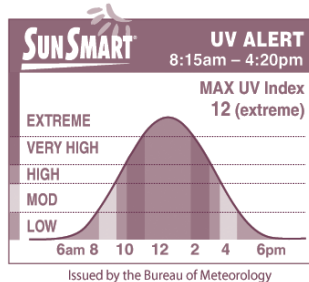
### Latest update: SunSmart UV Alert

The Cancer Council Australia in partnership with the Bureau of Meteorology and The Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency (ARPANSA) has launched the SunSmart UV Alert.

The SunSmart UV Alert aims to raise public awareness about the risk of exposure to UV radiation and to encourage people to adopt appropriate sun protective behaviours. The Cancer Council South Australia recommends people protect their skin at times when the UV radiation level is 3 and above, when it is strong enough to cause skin damage.

The Bureau of Meteorology forecasts the UV Index daily. The UV Index, adapted from the World Health Organisation's Global UV Index, provides a measure of solar UV radiation at the earth's surface. The values of the Index range from zero upward and the higher the Index value, the greater the potential for damage to your skin.

On days when the UV Index is forecast to reach 3 or above, the Bureau of Meteorology will issue the SunSmart UV Alert stating the times the UV will be at 3 and above during the day, when skin protection is most important. The SunSmart UV Alert appears daily in The Advertiser and Sunday Mail.



For the best protection from the sun when the UV radiation levels are 3 and above use a combination of sun protection measures including:

- Rescheduling outdoor activities (before 10 am and after 3 pm) when UV radiation levels are at their strongest.

Please circulate to:

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|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prinicpal        | <input type="checkbox"/> Science Coordinator     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> H&PE Coordinator | <input type="checkbox"/> Year Level Coordinators |

- Use shade as much as possible.
- Wear clothing that protects your arms and legs.
- Wear a hat that provides shade to your face, neck and ears.
- Liberally apply a SPF 30+ water resistant, broad spectrum sunscreen and reapply every two hours.
- Wear wrap around sunglasses to protect your eyes.

For more information about the SunSmart UV Alert visit The Cancer Council South Australia's SunSmart website at [www.sunsmart.org.au](http://www.sunsmart.org.au)

Other websites to visit for information:

[www.bom.gov.au/products/uvindex\\_national.shtml](http://www.bom.gov.au/products/uvindex_national.shtml)  
[www.arpansa.gov.au/uvindex/daily/ausuvindex.htm](http://www.arpansa.gov.au/uvindex/daily/ausuvindex.htm)  
[www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs271/en](http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs271/en)

### Skin cancer fast facts – from The Cancer Council South Australia

- Australia has the highest rate of skin cancer in the world.
- Sun exposure in the first 15 years of life contributes significantly to the lifetime risk of skin cancer.
- It is estimated that adopting sun protective behaviours or creating shady environments could prevent 90% of skin cancers.

### Healthy weight, good nutrition and physical activity reduce cancer risk

In Australia it is estimated that more than 6,000 deaths from cancer each year are due to three major risk factors.<sup>1</sup>

- Inadequate intake of fruit and vegetables.
- Inadequate physical activity.
- Overweight and obesity.

Obesity in particular, which has been a subject of much concern of late, is associated with increased risk of several types of cancer. The evidence is clear for cancer of the colon, breast (post-menopausal), endometrium, kidney and oesophagus. Overweight is similarly associated with these cancers, though the effect on risk is less<sup>2,3</sup>.

Based on this research, the following guidelines are recommended for adults to reduce the risk of getting cancer.

- Achieve and maintain a healthy body weight. A healthy body weight is having a Body Mass Index (BMI) in the range of 18.5 - 25.0 (Body mass index is your weight in kilograms divided by your height in metres squared).

- Eat at least 5 serves of vegetables and 2 serves of fruit each day and cut down on fat, salt and sugar.
- Be active every day. It is important to enjoy regular physical activity each day. Try to limit inactive leisure activities like watching TV.
- Limit or avoid drinking alcohol - alcohol increases the risk of developing a number of cancers.

- 1 Mathers C, Vos T & Stevenson C 1999. *The burden of disease and injury in Australia*. Canberra: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.
- 2 International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) 2002. *Handbooks of cancer prevention volume 6: weight control and physical activity*. Lyon: World Health Organisation.
- 3 World Health Organisation (WHO) and Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) 2003. *Diet, nutrition and the prevention of chronic diseases: report of a joint WHO/FAO expert consultation*. WHO technical report series 916. Geneva: WHO.

## Mt Compass Area School case study

Deb Scotton, an English teacher from Mt Compass Area School used the Tattoo resource developed by The Cancer Council Australia as the basis for this very innovative series of tasks based on the theme of sun protection. Her students were completing a Stage 1 semester course of English.

All students were involved with the following assignments:

1. Creating an advertisement for the radio or a short speech pointing out the risks of not being safe in the sun. Initially students wrote a script and then played a recording of it to the class. The advertisement had to be specifically aimed at young people between the ages of 14 to 25 years.
2. Production of a short video on being SunSmart for young people. Students worked in pairs or small groups to develop an idea, then planned and produced their own video. These were presented at a whole school assembly. Ideas included an animation made with plasticine people, use of the song 'True Colours' as the theme, and a dramatic piece of a young person getting skin cancer because they were always playing sport and not being SunSmart.
3. Students studied a range of posters that were aimed at young people. They analysed the posters for the techniques used and their effectiveness. The students then created and produced a poster that would appeal to young people and encourage them to be SunSmart.

Students gained knowledge and a deeper understanding of the impact of sun exposure and the associated risks. Using video production, radio advertising and art work/graphic design in the program engaged students, and provided them with valuable learning outcomes. By showcasing their work at a school assembly, students were able to take their message to the wider school community and through this encouraged their peers and younger students to be SunSmart. To purchase or hire Tattoo or obtain any other resources contact **The Cancer Council Helpline 13 11 20**.

## Did you know?

There is no such thing as windburn. Skin is burnt by the scattered and reflected ultraviolet rays of the sun, not by the wind. Have you ever been burnt on a windy night?

## Cross curriculum classroom activity

### Influences on health behaviour

1. Students brainstorm the different influences both positive and negative, on health behaviour in relation to sun safety eg friends, family, fashion, media, pastimes, culture etc
2. Students identify the influences on their own behaviour that may increase the risk of sun damage.
3. Students rank the influences from the most to the least influential and discuss, ie written response, class/group discussion.
4. Class discusses the main influences on their behaviour and what personal strategies could be adopted to ensure they are protected in the sun.

**Please note:** Prior to beginning this activity guidelines should be given to the students eg confidentiality, respecting other opinions, not identifying others by name etc.

### Newsletter snippet – cancer prevention

Here are some guidelines to reduce the risks of getting cancer:

- Achieve and maintain a healthy body weight.
- Eat 5 serves of vegetables and 2 serves of fruit every day.
- Limit or avoid drinking alcohol.
- Be active everyday.
- Don't smoke.
- Minimise your exposure to UV radiation, skin damage is cumulative and could lead to skin cancer.
- Be aware of cancer screening programs appropriate to your age and sex.

## Does an apple or more a day keep the doctor away?

You have probably heard the saying 'an apple a day keeps the doctor away'. According to one study it seems it does... Italian research has shown that people who ate one or more apples a day were at a lower risk of cancers of the mouth and larynx (21% reduction), oesophagus (25%), colorectum (42%), larynx (24%), breast (18%), ovary (15%) and prostate (9%). The researchers believe **it's not the apples themselves that are protective but rather that people who eat apples are also eating other healthy foods that together help protect against these cancers.**

*Adapted from: Annals of Oncology 2005; 16: 1841-44*

## The Speakers' Bureau

To organise a speaker to talk to staff/parent groups about skin cancer and/or nutrition contact the Speaker's Bureau Coordinator on 8291 4111 or download a request form from our website.

For cancer information and support contact

**The Cancer Council Helpline 13 11 20.**

The Cancer Council South Australia

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