

# Extension activities for 'The truth about UV rays' poster.

This poster is designed to address some of the common misconceptions and myths about skin cancer and ultraviolet (UV) radiation which can lead to poor sun protection habits among children and their families.

When addressing strongly established beliefs, research suggests that it is better to state what facts you want to establish, rather than restating or mentioning the original myth.

Some of the myths we were looking to correct that are relevant to school children are:

- Sun damage is not possible on windy, cloudy or cool days.
- People with olive or dark skin are not at risk of skin cancer.
- If you tan but don't burn, you don't need to bother with sun protection.

When using this poster as a teaching aid, always emphasise the correct facts and dispel the myth.

As you go through the true and false statements use these extension questions to further challenge the student's knowledge on UV radiation and sun protection:

## Extension activities for the poster:

**Truth 1:** Ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun can't be seen or felt.

The sun produces visible light, heat and UV radiation. UV radiation isn't visible to humans.

Extension question: Can you name three animals that can see UV radiation? *Insects (such as butterflies), birds, bats and rats.*

**Truth 2:** You can get sunburnt on a cold or cloudy day.

The UV radiation that causes sunburn can be just as high on cool or cloudy days as it is on sunny ones. UV radiation can also be reflected off snow, water and sand.

Extension question: Can you think of somewhere where it might be cold, but it's easy to get sunburnt? Anywhere with snow as it reflects up to 80% of UV radiation.

**False 1:** The amount of UV radiation that reaches the Earth is always the same everywhere. This is not true. UV radiation levels are lower in the morning, peak when the sun is overhead and drop as the sun moves lower in the afternoon. In summer, UV rays pass through less atmosphere because the earth is closer to the sun. In winter, UV rays go further to reach the earth and the atmosphere absorbs more UV radiation.

Extension question: Do you think more UV radiation will reach the earth at the Andes Mountains in Peru or in Bangladesh (a country that floods often)? *The Andes Mountains has higher UV radiation levels overall, as it has a higher altitude and therefore the UV radiation passes through less atmosphere to reach the earth.*

**Truth 3:** UV radiation can damage all skin types.

Anyone who grows up or lives in Australia can be at risk of skin cancer. Although people with naturally darker skin are at lower risk of skin cancer, all sun exposure carries a risk of skin and eye damage.

Extension question: What should someone with darker skin do during the times the SunSmart app recommends sun protection? *“Slip, slop, slap, seek and slide”.*

**Truth 4:** You need to apply sunscreen every two hours.

Sunscreen must be reapplied every two hours; and more frequently if it has been washed or wiped off. You should also make sure you put on enough sunscreen.

Extension question: What kind of activities might remove sunscreen? *Swimming, sweating or using a towel to dry yourself can all remove sunscreen.*

To find out more about how to apply sunscreen, watch this video with your class:

For more information about sunscreen refer to [Cancer Council SA's Fact Sheet on Sunscreen](#).

**False 2:** You don't need sun protection in winter.

In SA, the UV levels are high enough to damage skin most months of the year. The best way to know the specific times of day you require sun protection for the location where you live is to use the SunSmart App.

Extension question: Where else can you find out the daily UV level? *In the newspaper, on most Weather Apps, The Bureau of Meteorology's website and the Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency (ARPANSA) website.*