

Working outdoors

► **Phil Spark** from Deb Ltd provides a brief reminder of the steps outdoor workers should be taking to protect themselves from the sun.

Whilst the sun is a good source of Vitamin D, long-term exposure causes skin damage and every episode of sunburn increases the risk of skin cancer. Indeed, 90% of skin cancers occur on parts of the body usually not covered by clothing; the face, hands, forearms and ears.

There are two main types of skin cancer, malignant melanoma of the skin and non-melanoma skin cancer (NMSC). It is estimated that around 110,000 new cases of skin cancer are diagnosed each year, resulting in over 2,600 deaths.

Employers have a legal duty to provide a safe working environment and to assess the risks workers face. This includes assessing the risks to outdoor workers from the sun and then providing protective equipment, where necessary. Outdoor workers should also be given advice on how to protect themselves

Sun protection steps

- Cover up – protect all exposed areas. Keep your top on and wear a hat with a brim or flap that covers the back of the neck
- Apply sunscreen to all risk areas – face, neck & arms. Apply liberally every 2-3 hours as a minimum, or more often if sweating
- Drink plenty of water to avoid dehydration
- Stay in the shade when possible, especially during breaks
- Check skin regularly for any unusual moles, spots or other changes – report any concerns to your doctor

Adapted from: *Sun protection: Advice for employers of outdoor workers*. HSE (www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg337.pdf)

from the sun's rays (see box) and information on how to check for early signs of skin damage, changes or abnormalities. A tan is not healthy, it is a sign the skin has already been damaged.

A good quality sunscreen is of paramount importance to help prevent skin damage and those who work outside should be encouraged to use one. But what determines a good quality sunscreen?

For outdoor working, we recommend a minimum Sun Protection Factor (SPF) of 30. SPF 30 means that the product will stop 95-97% of UVB rays and allow 30 times longer

in the sun before burning than without it. However, it is important that the product is applied correctly. Most people use sunscreens improperly by not applying enough. Even on a cloudy day, 30-50% of the sun's rays reach the skin so sunscreen should be liberally applied every 2-3 hours when outdoors.

In addition to UVB protection, it is important that the sunscreen contains UVA protection. A sunscreen labelled 'Broad Spectrum' offers protection from both UVA and UVB rays. Cancer Research UK recommends using sunscreens with a star rating of four stars or more to protect against UVA.

www.debgroup.com

SKIN CANCER IS THE UK'S MOST COMMON CANCER...

- More people die from skin cancer in the UK than Australia
- Melanoma, the deadliest form of the disease is the most common cancer in the 15-34 age group
- Over the last 25 years, rates of melanoma in Britain have risen faster than any other cancer
- 80% of all skin cancers are caused by over-exposure to the sun and / or sunbeds.

THE FIVE S'S OF SUN SAFETY

- 1) SUNSCREEN**
Apply an SPF 30+ broad spectrum waterproof sunscreen every 2 hours
- 2) SUNHAT**
Always wear a broad-brimmed hat that shades your face, neck and ears.
- 3) SUNGLASSES**
Wear wrap-around sunglasses with UV protection to protect your eyes from the sun's rays.
- 4) SHOULDERS**
Wear protective clothing and always remember to keep shoulders covered.
- 5) SHADE**
Always seek shade - particularly during the hottest time of the day between 11am and 3pm.

EARLY DETECTION

YOU SHOULD CONSULT YOUR DOCTOR IF YOU DEVELOP ANY OF THE FOLLOWING SIGNS AS THESE MAY INDICATE A MELANOMA:

- Changing shape, particularly getting an irregular outline
- Changing colour (getting darker, becoming patchy or multi-shaded)
- An existing mole getting bigger or a new mole growing quickly
- A mole is bleeding, becoming crusty or looks inflamed
- A mole starts to itch or become painful

REMEMBER THE ABCD OF MELANOMA

- A=ASYMMETRY**
When half the mole does not match the other half
- B=BORDER**
When the borders of the mole are irregular/jagged
- C=COLOUR**
When the colour of the mole varies throughout
- D=DIAMETER**
If the diameter is larger than a pencil's eraser (6mm)

Remember: if you have any doubt you should consult your doctor immediately.

SKCIN
THE KAREN CLIFFORD SKIN CANCER CHARITY
www.skcin.org

► Deb Ltd supports the work of the SKCIN charity to promote sun safety. This free awareness poster can be downloaded from: www.skcin.org/Media/Downloads



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