Sun exposure

> The information on this page relates to a high-priority health and safety risk. The risk controls detailed below must be implemented and monitored in line with the safety management procedure (PDF 767 KB).

Over-exposure to the sun's ultraviolet (UV) radiation can cause sunburn, skin cancer and eye damage. Skin cancer rates in Australia are among the highest in the world.

Find out when you're most at risk from UV radiation and how and when to protect yourself. Find out about sun protection policies and requirements for education and care services.

Ultraviolet (UV) radiation

The UV index is an international standard measurement of the strength of UV from the sun on the ground at a particular time. As the UV index increases, the risk of sunburn and irreversible damage to your skin increases.

UV radiation:

- is not related to hot weather – its possible to get sunburnt on cool or cloudy days
- can't be seen or felt
- can be reflected off surfaces such as buildings, asphalt, concrete, water and sand
- can damage all skin types
- is at its peak at the middle of the day.

UV index	Exposure category
2 or below	Low
3 to 5	Moderate
6 to 7	High
8 to 10	Very high
11+	Extreme

A UV index of 3 is high enough to damage unprotected skin. Cancer Council SA recommends that you use sun protection measures if you're outdoors whenever the UV index is 3 and above. Times of the day when UV is 3 and above are known as 'sun protection times'.

You can read the forecast UV level and daily sun protection times for your location on:

- the Bureau of Meteorology forecast summary for South Australian towns. Click the link to the town closest to your location
- the free SunSmart Global UV app, which you can download to your smartphone or tablet
- the SunSmart UV widget, which you can add to your website.
- the SunSmart myuv.com.au website.

Sun protection policy

If you're a site leader, you must make sure your site has a sun protection policy to meet your duty of care and work health and safety obligations.

Follow these guidelines:

- Schools and early childhood education and care services must have a sun protection policy in place in terms 1, 3 and 4 (or from 1 August to 30 April) and whenever the UV radiation level is 3 and above at other times.
    - If your site is in or north of Elliston, Cowell, Port Broughton and Burra, you also need to implement sun protection measures within your sun protection policy in term 2, due to higher levels of UV at your location.
    - If your site is in or south of Kingston SE or Naracoorte, you can choose to implement sun protection during August only when the UV is 3 and above due to lower levels of UV at your location. If you choose this approach, you must make sure procedures are in place to ensure sun protection times are monitored daily.
- Out of school hours care (OSHC) services must have a sun protection policy in place for after school care in terms 1 and 4, and whenever the UV radiation level is 3 and above at other times.
- Vacation care services must have a sun protection policy in place from 1 August to 30 April and whenever the UV radiation level is 3 and above at other times.

Review your sun protection policy regularly (at least every 3 years) and make sure all families and workers are informed of its contents. Promote your policy using a range of different methods, such as newsletters, assemblies, bulletin boards, and parent and staff meetings, to reinforce its importance.

What to include in your sun protection policy

As a minimum, your sun protection policy should include requirements for:

- sun protective hats and clothing
- application and reapplication of SPF 50+ broad-spectrum water-resistant sunscreen
- use of shade in outdoor areas
- planning for outdoor camps, excursions and water-based activities
- scheduling activities to minimise exposure during peak UV radiation times
- education on sun protection
- employee sun protection behaviours for work health and safety and role-modelling
- informing the site community, including workers, children and young people, parents and carers, and volunteers, of the sun protection policy.

Sun protective hats

Broad brimmed, bucket or legionnaire style hats that shade the head, face, ears and neck provide the best sun protection. Baseball caps or visors don't provide good sun protection and aren't recommended.

Phase out caps from uniform or dress codes and replace them with hats that provide better sun protection.

Early years, primary schools, OSHC and vacation care services must enforce a 'no hat, play in the shade' approach to sun protection.

Secondary students should be strongly encouraged to wear sun protective hats. See Cancer Council SA's fact sheet on how to implement hats in the secondary school setting for guidance.

Sunscreen

Supervise children to ensure they apply and reapply sunscreen to all exposed skin.

Obtain written permission from a parent or carer before applying sunscreen to a child or young person who needs help to apply it.

Develop a sunscreen application and reapplication routine, where sunscreen is applied at the same time each day during policy implementation times. Alternatively, have a process in place to monitor local daily sun protection times, to guide sunscreen application and reapplication times each day. Aim for sunscreen application at least twice daily throughout the day.

To achieve maximum protection from sunscreen it is recommended to:

- apply sunscreen 20 minutes before going outside where possible
- reapply sunscreen every 2 hours if remaining or returning outdoors.

Shade

During policy implementation times, hold outdoor activities in shaded areas where possible, or provide rest areas in the shade for use during breaks.

Use portable shade structures such as tents, canopies and umbrellas to provide additional shade for outdoor activities where permanent shade is lacking. For example, during sports days, swimming and aquatics activities, and outdoor camps and excursions.

Sun protection policy templates and checklists

To ensure your sun protection policy is comprehensive, use the following Cancer Council SA templates and checklists when developing or reviewing and updating your policy:

Early childhood, preschools and kindergartens

- Sun protection policy review checklist
- Sun protection policy template
- Answers to frequently asked questions

OSHC and vacation care services

- Sun protection policy review checklist
- Sun protection policy template
- Answers to frequently asked questions

Primary and combined schools

- Sun protection policy review checklist
- Sun protection policy template
- Answers to frequently asked questions

Primary and combined schools, including OSHC and vacation care

- Sun protection policy template

Secondary schools

- Sun protection policy review checklist
- Sun protection policy template
- Answers to frequently asked questions.

SunSmart Schools and Early Childhood Program

Education and care services are encouraged to achieve or maintain SunSmart recognition under Cancer Council's SunSmart Schools and Early Childhood Program. This is a free program that recognises sites with comprehensive sun protection policies and practices in place.

Recognition is awarded for a 3-year period, after which time it can be renewed at no cost. It comes with a range of benefits, including a 25% discount on body sunscreen and discounts on other retail items such as facial sunscreen, hats and sunglasses from Cancer Council's shop in Regent Arcade, Adelaide.

Sun protection measures for workers

You'll get the best protection from UV radiation if you use a combination of all 5 of the following sun protection measures when you're outside during sun protection times. If you work in an education and care service, you'll be a great role model for the children and young people around you along with protecting yourself.

Slip on clothing

Choose clothing that covers as much skin as possible, such as:

- tops with collars or higher necklines and at least elbow-length sleeves
- long pants, or shorts, skirts or dresses that extend at least to the knee.

If you spend a lot of time outdoors, look for clothing with a tag with an ultraviolet protection factor (UPF) rating for sun protection.

See Cancer Council SA's sun protective clothing fact sheet for more information.

Slop on sunscreen

Use sunscreen that has a high sun protection factor (SPF). Look for sunscreen that's labelled SPF50+.

Aim to apply sunscreen 20 minutes before going outside and reapply every 2 hours, even if the label states '4 hours water resistant'.

Reapply sunscreen after swimming or water sports, and after towel drying.

See Cancer Council SA's sunscreen fact sheet for more information.

Slap on a hat

Choose a broad brimmed, bucket or legionnaire style hat capable of shading your head, face, ears and neck. Baseball caps and visors don't provide good sun protection and are not recommended.

See Cancer Council SA's sun protective hats fact sheet for more information on choosing a hat.

Seek shade

Spend as much time in the shade as you can when you're outdoors during daily sun protection times.

Although trees and shade structures provide some protection from UV radiation, they don't totally block it out. UV radiation can still be reflected off the ground and buildings around you even under dense shade, so always use shade in combination with clothing, hats, sunglasses and sunscreen for maximum protection.

See Cancer Council SA's shade fact sheet for more information.

Slide on sunglasses

For the best protection, choose close fitting wraparound sunglasses that cover as much of the eye area as possible.

Make sure sunglasses comply with Australian Standard AS/NZS 1067:2016, lens category 2, 3 or 4.

Look for sunglasses marked with an eye protection factor (EPF) of 9 or 10, or labelled UV 400.

See Cancer Council SA's sunglasses fact sheet for more information.

Additional guidance for outdoor workers

If you spend a lot of time working outdoors on a regular basis, Cancer Council SA recommends that you use sun protection all year round. This is because UV exposure accumulates throughout the day, meaning lower level exposures add to your total dose of UV radiation. Long-term exposure to UV radiation of any intensity can increase your risk of developing skin cancer.

If you need safety glasses to protect your eyes when working outdoors, choose protective eyewear that complies with Australian Standard AS/NZS 1337.1:2010 – standard sunglasses are not sufficient. Choose either tinted safety glasses, or untinted glasses marked 'O' (for 'outdoor'), which also offer sufficient UV protection for outdoor use.

Sun protection provision and reimbursement

Department employees who work more than 50% of their time outdoors are eligible to receive reimbursement for sunglasses, sun hats and sunscreen.

Eligible employees can include, but aren't limited to:

- agricultural studies, preschool and physical education teachers
- aquatic and swim instructors
- grounds persons.

See personal protective equipment (PPE) claims and reimbursements for more information.

Skin checks

Around 2 in 3 Australians will be diagnosed with some form of skin cancer in their lifetime. Early detection and treatment is essential to give you the best outcome.

Skin cancer can appear on any part of your skin, not just areas exposed to the sun. You should check all of your skin regularly so you can find any changes early.

If you notice any spots or blemishes on your skin that have changed in size, shape or colour, anything that itches or bleeds, or any new spots that concern you, see your doctor as soon as possible.

See Cancer Council SA's guidance on finding skin cancer early for more information.

Training

Because UV radiation is at its peak during typical working hours, the department has a duty to provide you with information, training and instruction to help you understand the risks and how to protect yourself.

We also have a duty to minimise the risk of harm to children and young people attending our education and care services.

To assist with this, and to complement the guidance on this page, Cancer Council SA has developed 2 training modules that you can access in Plink.

SunSmart module 1: Ultraviolet radiation and skin cancer is for all workers, including corporate staff. Topics covered include:

- understanding ultraviolet radiation
- skin cancer prevention
- finding skin cancer early.

SunSmart module 2: Safety in the sun is for workers who engage with children up to and including year 6. Topics covered include:

- sun protection policies
- safety in the sun
- achieving SunSmart recognition.

Standards and procedures

- Design standards for government education and care facilities
- Safety management procedure (PDF 767 KB)
- Personal protective equipment claims and reimbursement procedure (PDF 574 KB)

Contact

Work Health and Safety

Phone: 8226 1440

Email: education.WHS@sa.gov.au

Related information

- Infrastructure safety checklist (PDF 1 MB)
- Selecting and maintaining trees
- Camps and excursions

Other websites

Cancer Council SA

National Quality Standard and regulations:

- Regulation 168 (2) (a) (ii) – Policies and procedures
- National Quality Standard – Standard 2.3 – Children's safety (PDF 1 MB)
- Regulation 114 – Shade (PDF 30 KB)