



UNITED KINGDOM

SUN HEALTH

Keeping safe in the hot weather

THE SUMMER SEASON HAS NOW BEGUN!

Road maintenance and construction projects are hazardous activities, often made worse by seasonal issues. Research has found that 50 individuals each year are killed after sun exposure at work and 250 cases of skin melanoma are registered. In summer, we must all work hard at looking after ourselves, each other and those affected by our work. To ensure you can continue to work safely and without damage to your health, we advise that you adhere to the following.



WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF SUN EXPOSURE?



The sun's rays make us feel good, and in the short term, make us look good. But our love affair isn't a two-way street.

Exposure to sun causes most of the wrinkles and age spots on our faces. Consider this: One woman at age 40 who has protected her skin from the sun actually has the skin of a 30-year-old!

We often associate a glowing complexion

with good health, but skin colour obtained from being in the sun or in a tanning booth accelerates the effects of aging and increases your risk for developing skin cancer.

Sun exposure causes most of the skin changes that we think of as a normal part of aging. Over time, the sun's ultraviolet (UV) light damages the fibres in the skin called elastin.

When these fibres break down, the skin begins to sag, stretch, and lose its ability to go back into place after stretching. The skin also bruises and tears more easily taking longer to heal. So, while sun damage to the skin may not be apparent when you're young, it will show later in life.

An average 60 workers die every year in the UK from malignant melanoma, a severe form of skin cancer. Annually in the UK there are 1,500 cases of non-malignant skin cancer, which is more easily treatable, and 240 cases of malignant melanoma, which is much more likely to be fatal. All these cases are linked to occupational exposure.

Part of the problem in the UK is that sun safety isn't always taken seriously – people assume the climate isn't sunny enough or hot enough. We consider it more when we visit the beach rather than working in the sun for 40 hours a week.



PROTECTION



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UV INDEX

11+

Extreme

8,9,10

Very High

6,7

High

3,4,5

Moderate

1,2

Low

PROTECT YOURSELF IN 5 WAYS



Slip on sun-protective clothing



Slop on SPF30+ sunscreen. Reapply every 2 hours



Slap on a broad-brimmed hat



Seek shade



Slide on wrap-around sunglasses

Sun protection is generally not needed unless outside for extended periods

UV exposure is the main preventable cause of skin cancer, so here are a few tips on how to stay safe in the sun:

Clothing/PPE:

When heat rises, the reasons for wearing mandatory PPE don't evaporate! Cover up. Work clothing made from close woven fabric forms a barrier to the sun's harmful rays. Keep your shirt or other top on, especially while you are working around midday. Wearing your safety helmet protects the head from direct sunlight. When using all the PPE required, you should only have your face that is not covered by uniform or PPE.

Get your Timing Right:

Skin needs time to absorb sunscreen, so apply generously about 20 to 30 minutes before going out. Reapply frequently at least every two hours, as it can come off when sweating or through rubbing.

Water & Working Hours:

Ensure you are drinking plenty of water (check the colour of your urine is not too dark) & drink responsibly between shifts (alcohol dehydrates the body). When taking breaks, try to sit in the shade and avoid the mid-day sun.

Healthy adult living in a temperate climate need an adequate daily fluid intake this is: About 15.5 cups (3.7 litres) of fluids for men. About 11.5 cups (2.7 litres) of fluids a day for women.

Sun Tans & Skin Cancer:

Hats and other clothing are the best form of protection, but sun protection with a factor (SPF) rating of are your defence as it protects against UVA and UVB & can add useful protection for parts of your body that are not easy to shade from the sun. Ensure you read the supplier's instructions.

Check Your skin:

Don't put off going to the doctor when you know you should. If you have any kind of medical check-up tell the doctor that you have an outdoor job and ask if there are any suspicious signs on your skin.

USEFUL LINKS

- [IOSH Sun Health Video](#)
- [Sun Health Posters](#)
- [IOSH Myth Buster Quiz](#)
- [Skin Type Scale](#)
- [Urine Colour Chart](#)





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ALISON PARKER - MY STORY

Living in England is often a cold and wet existence and when on the odd occasion the sun shows itself, we forget ourselves and head to the parks and beaches to catch some rays without lathering our sun deprived skin with the appropriate factor 50 sun cream. Back in the 1970s if you did use sun lotion it was more likely to be Amber Soleil oil, which in affect fried you in the sun!

This then is Alison's story about the huge effect of not protecting yourself in the sun, can have on your body, health and wellbeing.



About six or seven year ago, I noticed a small dark spot on my right thigh. It wasn't itchy or bleeding but I was concerned and I subsequently booked an appointment with my doctor who told me not to worry as it was probably just a new mole growing. Being the advice of a doctor, I did nothing about it. Then, about three years ago, I was having trouble with my knee and I went to see my (new) doctor. Whilst she was examining my knee she noticed the spot on my thigh and she told me she 'didn't like the look of it' and sent me off to the hospital to have a scan. Following the scan, I was asked to come back in and I was told by the consultant that they wanted to remove the mole and investigate exactly what it was.

It turned out to be Stage 1 Cancer, but luckily for me it had not spread as skin cancer goes under the skin. I then had to go back a few weeks later to have an area around the original spot removed just to check if it had spread. I ended up with a lovely set of stitches – about 20 in all! – but again I was lucky that the results came back and nothing else had been found – so I was obviously delighted!

Then for about a year after I had regular check-ups but nothing further was found. The staff were amazing and very helpful and I was told it was probably a result of my miss-spent youth sunbathing without any sun cream. I was also advised that by the time people reach the age of thirty they should have all the moles they are going to get so anything that looks like a new mole is probably not a mole at all and that one should always get it checked out.

The staff also advised me to always use sun cream, so now whenever the sun is out I 'slap on' Factor 50 to my face and any other areas that are exposed and I generally try to avoid the sun as much as possible. I now also keep a tube of sunscreen in my bag and if I'm out anywhere where I see my friends/family and it's sunny, I nag them to put sun cream on as well.

Apparently, damage from the sun can take years to show itself but I would recommend that if anyone has a mole like spot that suddenly appears to get it checked like I did and if the first doctor tells you it's nothing and you're still worried, then definitely seek a second opinion.

I must say it was a shock at the time but I was lucky it wasn't any worse. I really don't think it's worth having a tan especially these days, as there are so many products you can buy that can give you the same effect without the pain. I was also advised that sun beds can cause skin cancer – so I would recommend avoiding them too and my consultant told me that cancers can grow in areas that don't even see the sun, as rays can get through clothing and even windows, so be aware and take care!

Alison Parker
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