Hot times ahead

Now that summer has finally arrived, Sydneysiders and their out-of-town visitors are flocking to beaches and pools in their thousands.

With the season’s slow start to high temperatures, the reminder from experts is to limit exposure during the peak time of the day when the sun is at its most fierce.

Sydney Melanoma Diagnostic Centre Director, Professor Scott Menzies, said people should avoid being out in the sun during the middle of the day, between 11am and 3pm.

“There are a number of simple ways you can protect your skin,” Professor Menzies said.

“Everyone needs to remember that skin can burn in just a matter of minutes of exposure and that damage can happen even before the skin starts to show any signs of burning.”

Young people are especially at risk, according to recent data.

“In NSW melanoma is the number one cancer among women aged 15 to 29 and men aged 25 to 54,” Prof. Menzies said.

“Young people should be particularly careful about sun-baking at the height of the day.

“Latest figures also show that in 2008 more than 3,500 new cases of melanoma were diagnosed in NSW and 343 NSW residents lost their lives to melanoma.

“If possible, your first option should be to avoid exposing your skin to sun in the summer from 11am to 3pm.

“Everyone needs some Vitamin D, which they can get by just going about their daily business and having short bursts outdoors.

“Fair skinned individuals only need around six to eight minutes of daily sun exposure just before or after the peak 11am to 3pm period to get adequate levels of Vitamin D,” he said.

There are a few simple rules to follow:

Shade
During daylight saving, the strength of UV radiation is highest from 11am to 3pm. The best thing you can do for your skin is to avoid the sun during this period and keep in the shade.

Protective clothing
Wear clothing that covers as much skin as possible, especially your shoulders, arms and legs. The best forms of protective clothing are loose fitting, closely woven fabrics.
**Broad-brimmed hat**
A hat with a brim of at least 7cm is a great way to protect not only the top of your head but also your neck, ears and face – parts of the body where skin cancer often occurs.

**Sunglasses**
The most effective way to protect your eyes is to wear sunglasses that meet the Australian Standard AS 1067 and wrap around the sides of the face.

**Sunscreen**
Generously apply SPF30+ broad spectrum sunscreen to your skin, 20 minutes before you head outdoors. Remember to re-apply every two hours.

The Sydney Melanoma Diagnostic Centre is a clinical unit of the Sydney Cancer Centre, Level 2, Gloucester House, Royal Prince Alfred Hospital.

For patient bookings or enquiries call 9515 8537 or visit [www.sydneycancer.com.au](http://www.sydneycancer.com.au)