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## Don't leave home 'naked' – make sun protection part of your daily routine

A leading skin cancer specialist at Sydney Local Health District says Australians should adopt the five sun protection habits each summer morning after brushing their teeth.

Professor of Dermatology Diona Damian wants everyone – men, women and children – to adopt a simple preventative routine every morning before leaving home to help reduce the risk of getting skin cancer.

“We all brush our teeth in the morning. Put a bottle of sunscreen next to the toothpaste in the bathroom. It needs to live there.

“Apply the sunscreen on your face and any parts of your body which will be exposed to sunlight.

“It'll take less than a minute each morning to put some sunscreen on your face and body.”

“Sunscreen needs to be applied at least 30 minutes before leaving the house, so by keeping it with the toothbrush you will be protected by the time you are ready to leave. Don't leave it until you're ready to go.”

People with sunspots on their face can see a 30 to 40 per cent reduction in these scaly lesions within a few months of starting this simple routine, she said.

However, it is important not to think you're protected just by applying sunscreen – in addition, slip on a shirt, slap on a hat, slide on your sunglasses and seek shade.

“Sun safety needs to become a habit, so that it feels 'naked' to leave home without having sunscreen, sun protective clothing, sunglasses and a hat,” Professor Damian said.

“Pop some sunscreen in your bag or keep some at your desk to reapply during the day.

“It's best to choose a broad spectrum sunscreen with a high sun protection factor (SPF) that offers protection from both UVA and UVB rays.

“In Australia the UV radiation is so high, even on an overcast day, so use a high SPF sunscreen. I recommend SPF 50-plus for my patients,” Professor Damian said.

“It's never too late to reduce the risk of skin cancer.”

Professor Damian is a clinical academic at Royal Prince Alfred (RPA) Hospital and an expert in skin cancer prevention and treatment.

“Some people think it’s too late and they can’t be bothered. But whether you’re 18 or 80, you can make a difference to your skin,” Professor Damian said.

Australia has one of the highest rates of skin cancer in the world. In 2019 alone, more than 5,000 people in NSW are expected to be diagnosed with melanoma, the most dangerous form of skin cancer, and more than 600 will die.

Data from the Cancer Council reveals that each year more than 440,000 Australians are treated for skin cancer and more than 2000 die from skin cancer annually.

Skin cancer develops in the skin’s top layer, or epidermis, and the main cause of skin cancer is over-exposure to UV radiation from the sun.

The Cancer Council’s statistics show that about two in three Australians will be diagnosed with some form of skin cancer before the age of 70.

But 95 per cent of melanoma and 99 per cent of non-melanoma skin cancers are preventable by protecting yourself from UV.

The five sun protective measures are:

- Slip on a shirt and protective clothing to cover as much of your skin as possible
- Slop on sunscreen
- Slap on a broad-brimmed hat
- Slide on sunglasses that wrap around the sides of the face to protect both the eyes and the delicate skin around them
- Seek shade And, if possible, stay out of the sun during the middle of the day – between 11am and 3pm during daylight saving – when the UV Index will be highest.

At her clinic at RPA, Professor Damian sees high-risk skin cancer patients, including those with melanoma, which is considered the most serious type of skin cancer as it’s more likely to spread to other parts of the body.

The most common type of skin cancer is basal cell carcinoma (BCC), followed by squamous cell carcinoma (SCC) which usually develops on the parts of the body most exposed to the sun. Most skin cancers can be cured if diagnosed and treated early.

The NSW Government, through the Cancer Institute NSW, is investing \$3.4 million in 2018-19 for skin cancer prevention.

**Professor Diona Damian is available for interview.**

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