

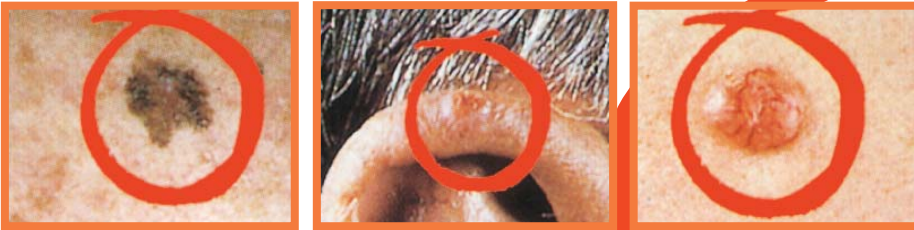
Be Sunsmart These Holidays

Take care between September and March, and especially between 11am - 4pm when UV radiation levels are very high.



Dr Karen Parkes

Take time to **spot** the difference



Most of us have spots on our skin. That is quite normal.

However be on the lookout for

- any changed or new freckle
- a spot that looks different from other spots around it
- a spot that has changed colour, shape or size in the last few months

What will a spot check involve with your family doctor?

- Your doctor will assess your risk of skin cancer including any family history or severe sun-burn in the past.
- The doctor will discuss the changes you have noticed and any symptoms like itchiness or bleeding.
- Your skin will be examined for signs of the different types of skin cancer.
- If there are any lesions of concern the doctor will discuss further investigation. This may involve a punch biopsy or removal of the lesion with your doctor, or a referral to a specialist, possibly with a photograph of the lesion.
- If the lesion turns out to be OK, use the chance to discuss any family history of cancer and arrange for any other screening tests that may be appropriate for breast, cervical, bowel or prostate cancer.

Frequently Asked Questions

Can you get sunburnt on a cloudy day or in water?

Yes, up to 80% of solar UV radiation penetrates light cloud cover, water offers only minimal protection and reflections from water increase UV radiation exposure.

Does a tan or olive skin protect you from the sun?

A dark tan on fair skin offers only limited protection equivalent to an SPF of about 4. Everyone, regardless of skin type, should be aware of the risk of skin damage. Many people with olive skin underestimate how much protection they need.

Why are New Zealand's skin cancer rates so high?

It's a combination of factors such as our outdoor lifestyles, fair skins, and clear skies. Superficial skin cancers (basal and squamous cell) result from cumulative life-time ultraviolet (UV) exposure and up to 80% exposure is commonly received during childhood. Episodes of sunburn, particularly in childhood and adolescence, also increase the risk of melanoma. Earth's tilt means NZ is closer to the sun meaning we often enjoy being outside when the temperature is pleasant but the Ultraviolet Radiation is extremely high.

If I stay out of the sun will I get enough Vitamin D?

Amount of exposure to the sun to get Vitamin D varies according to skin type. Generally darker skinned populations need more – for most people about 30 minutes exposure a day is enough. Ensure most of this is outside the hours of 11am to 4pm when the UV radiation levels are at their highest. ■

Always remember to...

Slip on some sun-protective clothing, i.e. shirt with a collar and long sleeves and trousers or long-legged shorts

Slop on SPF30+ sunscreen 20 minutes before you go outdoors and every two hours afterwards, especially after exercise, swimming or towel drying. (Note: sunscreen should never be your only or main method of sun protection)

Slap on a hat that protects your face, head, neck and ears.

Seek shade whenever possible.

Wrap on some sunglasses: make sure they meet the Australian/New Zealand Standard.



For further information contact

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