

WORK IN THE SUN? STAY SAFE

Staying safe when working outdoors

Information for *employees*



People whose job keeps them outdoors for a long time, such as farm or building site workers, market gardeners, outdoor activity workers and some public service workers could get more sun on their skin than is healthy for them.

Such people can be at greater risk of skin cancer. This leaflet provides some basic information to help you protect yourself.

Even if your skin is not fair and freckled, you should still be particularly careful while you are working out of doors in the summer in the three or four hours around midday. The sun is most intense at these times.



What are the dangers?

In the short term...

sunburn can blister your skin and make it peel, but even mild reddening is a sign of skin damage.

In the long term...

too much sun will speed up the ageing of your skin, making it leathery, mottled and wrinkled, but the most serious effect is an increased chance of developing skin cancer.

CHECK YOUR SKIN

The first warning sign is often a small scabby spot which does not clear after a few weeks.

Look for changed or newly formed moles or any skin discolouration. It is normal for new moles to appear until you are about 18 years old.

As an adult you should pay particular attention to any growths which appear on the face, especially around the nose and eyes, or on the backs of the hands. You should show your doctor any moles which change in size, colour, shape or start to bleed.

If you notice any of these signs consult your own doctor, or your works medical department if you have one.



What can I do to protect myself?

- Try to avoid the mild reddening which is a sign of skin damage as well as being an early sign of burning.
- Take your breaks in the shade if you can - this will reduce your risk of harming your skin and also help to keep you cool.
- Don't be complacent; get to know your skin's most vulnerable areas (for example back of neck, head) and keep them covered.
- Don't try to get a tan - it's not a healthy sign. It might look good but it indicates that the skin has already been damaged.
- Wear sun cream with a protection factor (SPF) rating of 15 or more as it protects against UVA and UVB.

For more information:

Visit: www.hseni.gov.uk/safeskin

Call: 0800 0320 121

Contact your local council for more information and advice.

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Information for *employers*



If you are an employer or manager responsible for people whose work keeps them outside for most of the day, consider how you can reduce the health risks for your employees when they are working in the sun.

Exposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun can cause skin damage, including sunburn, blistering, skin ageing and in the long term can lead to skin cancer. Skin cancer is the most common form of cancer in the UK, with over 40 000 new cases diagnosed each year.

UV radiation should be considered an occupational hazard for people who work outdoors.



What can an employer do?

- Include sun protection advice in routine health and safety training. Inform workers that a tan is not healthy - it is a sign that skin has already been damaged by the sun.
- Encourage workers to keep covered up during the summer months - especially at lunch time when the sun is at its hottest.
- Encourage workers to use sunscreen of at least SPF (Sun Protection Factor) 15 on any part of the body they can't cover up and to apply it as directed on the product.
- Encourage workers to take their breaks in the shade, if possible, rather than staying out in the sun.
- Consider scheduling work to minimise exposure.
- Encourage workers to drink plenty of water to avoid dehydration and site water points and rest areas in the shade.
- Keep your workers informed about the dangers of sun exposure.
- Encourage workers to check their skin regularly for unusual spots or moles that change size, shape or colour and to seek medical advice promptly if they find anything that causes them concern.
- Consulting your employees and their safety representatives is important. Take their views into account when introducing any new sun safety initiatives.



What does the law require?

The law requires employers to adequately control exposure to materials in the workplace that cause ill health.

This includes controlling exposure to materials that cause skin diseases and to materials that enter the body through the skin and cause problems elsewhere.



What are the benefits?

- Fewer absence days due to sunburn.
- A healthier and better-informed workforce.
- Reduced risk to employees of skin cancer from long-term sun exposure.