

# Rural safety – skin cancer >

**This bulletin outlines some simple safety guidelines for those working in the rural industry and is one of a series on Rural Industry safety.**

**Two out of every three Australians are likely to develop skin cancer.**

**As a rural worker you spend most of your time during the day outside. You are therefore most at risk.**

## Remember

- You do not actually have to get sunburnt to damage your skin and risk skin cancer.
- Skin cancers are mostly related to over-exposure to the sun **taking place over a period of time**. Most skin cancer can be prevented by protecting the skin from the sun



## Types of skin cancer

There are various types of skin cancer:

- **Basal Cell Carcinoma** - starts as a small lump which flattens out as it grows. One of the two most common growths. It can be easily treated and cured.
- **Squamous Cell Carcinoma** - is the other most common growth, however, it is more likely to spread to other parts of the body.
- **Malignant Melanoma** - the most dangerous type of skin cancer. Often starts as a dark mole. This type is responsible for over 1200 deaths in Australia each year.

**Sunspot** (Solar Keratosis) - a small scaly patch of skin occurring on the arms, face, nose and ears. They are not strictly a form of cancer but indicate excessive exposure to solar UV radiation.

## Protection

All persons on the farm including children should be encouraged to protect themselves against the sun.

- Highest risk time in the sun is between 10.00am and 3.00pm.
- Wear protective clothing, ie a shady hat, collared shirt in a dark, close weave fabric with long sleeves and trousers.

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- Use a sunscreen with very high sun protection factor at least SPF 15+ before you go out into the sun.
- Noses, lips, ears, bald heads, necks and backs of hands need extra protection.
- Reapply sunscreen regularly, particularly if you are perspiring, at least every 2 hours.
- Over-exposing yourself to the sun's ultraviolet rays increases the risk of skin cancers, now and in the future.
- Use a tractor with shade protection fitted.

**The easiest way of dealing with skin cancer is to avoid getting it.**

### **Check for early signs**

Checks should be made for early signs of cancer. These include:

- any unusual skin condition that doesn't heal;
- any sore, ulcer or scaly patch on the skin;
- a white patch on the lips that doesn't heal;
- any mole that seems to grow quickly;
- any mole that changes shape, colour or size;
- any mole that bleeds or itches.

If any of these early warning signs is noticed a doctor should be consulted.

**SKIN cancers are mostly related to over-exposure to the sun over a period of time. Reduce the risk - Cover up!**

### **Do you:**

- reduce the amount of exposure during peak times?
- wear a hat, sunscreen and long sleeve collared shirt and trousers?
- check for early signs of skin cancer?

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