

## Protecting Outdoor Workers from Ultraviolet Radiation

Skin cancer is the most common cancer in New Zealand. We also have one of the highest rates of skin cancer in the world. Most skin cancers are caused by excessive Ultra Violet Radiation Exposure (UVR), which are at their highest during the daylight saving months.

Too much sun damages the skin cells causing wrinkles, freckles, skin texture changes, dilated blood vessels and skin cancers among other problems.

The two most common types of skin cancer are basal cell cancer and squamous cell cancer. They usually form on the head, face, neck, hands and arms. Another type of skin cancer, melanoma, is more dangerous but less common.

**What are the signs and symptoms of skin cancer?** Skin cancer can be found early if you know what to look for and regularly check your skin. If you have any of the following symptoms, tell your doctor.

- any change on the skin, especially in the size or colour of a mole or other darkly pigmented growth or spot, or a new growth
- scaliness, oozing, bleeding, or change in the appearance of a bump or nodule
- the spread of pigmentation beyond its border such as dark colouring that spreads past the edge of a mole or mark
- a change in sensation, itchiness, tenderness, or pain

**How can you reduce the risk of skin cancer?** The best ways to lower the risk of skin cancers are to avoid intense sunlight for long periods of time and to practice sun safety. You can continue to exercise and enjoy the outdoors while practicing sun safety at the same time.

**Protect your Workers.** The Health and Safety in Employment Act 1992 requires employers to protect their employees' health and safety at work. This means that you must protect your workers if they are exposed to Ultra Violet Radiation by developing a programme to manage the risk to UVR. OHM can help you write a policy - contact us at [info@ohm.co.nz](mailto:info@ohm.co.nz).

Here are some ways you can do this:

- Seek shade: Look for or create shade, especially in the middle of the day when the sun's rays are strongest. Try and plan work and breaks in shade areas during the hottest part of the day. Remember that on an overcast UV rays can travel through the clouds
- Avoid the sun between 11 a.m. and 4 p.m. If possible schedule outdoor work outside these hours when UVR is low
- Rotate employees between inside and outside work so the same workers are not in the sun all the time
- Provide protective gear: Clothing should cover as much of the body as possible. Hats need to shade the neck, face and ears. Sunglasses need to fit closely, wrap around and meet AS/NZ Standards. Sunscreen needs to be broad spectrum and water resistant with a sun protection factor of 30+ that meets AS/NZ Standards
- Provide information and training: Ensure your workers are aware of the risks and the controls in place at your worksite, provide supervision and education sessions on skin self checks

Links

[www.sunsmart.org.nz](http://www.sunsmart.org.nz)

[www.cancernz.org.nz](http://www.cancernz.org.nz)

[www.osh.govt.nz](http://www.osh.govt.nz)