



Prevention guidelines

Can melanoma be prevented?

The genetically determined risk factors for melanoma, such as having a fair complexion, numerous moles and a family history of melanoma, cannot be modified or eradicated. However, we can significantly reduce the risk of developing melanoma by following these prevention guidelines.

- **Exposure to the sun (insolation)**

Sudden, intensive and direct exposure to the sun should definitely be avoided. It is wise to avoid prolonged direct exposure to sunlight, especially between 11am and 3pm.

- **Sunscreen**

Sunscreen should have a high sun protection factor – factor 15-30 for adults, 30-50 for children – and provide equal protection from UVA and UVB rays. The sunscreen should be applied half an hour before going out into the sun and repeated every two to three hours.

- **Shade**

It should be stressed that being under an umbrella in an open environment such as at the beach will still lead to sunburn from reflected UV rays unless additional sun protection measures are employed. Likewise, the sun's rays do penetrate clouds in significant amounts, and hence there is still a tendency for skin become sunburnt even on overcast spring/summer days.

- **Clothing**

Clothing provides the best protection from intensive sunlight. Short-sleeved tops are better than sleeveless ones and the material should preferably be tightly woven. It is good to wear a wide-brimmed hat and Polaroid sunglasses (since UV rays are also harmful to the eyes). Today, clothing for children, including swimwear, with inbuilt sun protection (up to factor 50) is available on the market.

- **Skin type**

Generally, the rule is that skin must be gradually accustomed to the sun's rays. Skin that has tanned gradually and continuously can sustain UV rays up to 10 times better than untanned skin. Everyone should also know the specific personal protection time that applies to his or her skin type, in other words, how long unprotected exposure to the sun is recommended. The skin type is identified by various characteristics, such as hair colour or fairness of complexion. The skin is classed in four different types:

Skin type 1:

- Fair skin, often with freckles
- Blond or red hair
- Blue or green eyes

- The skin is extremely sensitive to the sun, does not tan but goes red
- Personal protection time of three to 10 minutes

Skin type 2:

- Fair skin, but a little darker than skin type 1
- Blond to dark blond hair
- Blue eyes
- The skin is sensitive to the sun, tans slowly and is prone to sunburn
- Personal protection time of 10 to 20 minutes

Skin type 3:

- Slightly darker complexion
- Dark blond to brown hair
- Various eye colours
- The skin is only slightly sensitive to the sun, tans easily and quickly, the tan lasts a long time
- Personal protection time of 20 to 30 minutes

Skin type 4

- Light brown skin
- The hair is dark brown or black
- Dark eyes
- The skin is robust, tans quickly and deeply, the tan lasts a long time
- Personal protection time of 40 minutes

- **Children and young people**

The risk of developing skin cancer is established during childhood and younger years. That is why children and young people should use a particularly effective sunscreen with sun protection factors of between 20 and 30 that protect from UVA and UVB rays and are waterproof. Wearing a T-shirt and a sun hat should be the norm. Quality sunglasses are ideal for protecting the eyes – adults can act as role models here.

- **Cosmetics and medicines**

Certain medicines increase sensitivity to light. This is something that should be discussed with a doctor or pharmacist before exposing oneself to the sun. Deodorants, cosmetics and perfumes can cause an unpleasant reaction to the sun or permanent pigmentation. Application of such products should therefore be avoided immediately before sunbathing.

As at: