

## Adding some more slop to the slip and slap

Despite strange weather patterns around Australia, the calendar tells us summer is arriving soon. So it's about now that, on a personal level, greater areas of skin get displayed. Whilst this is an understandable response to high temperature and high humidity, there are some common sense precautions we need to take.

Research undertaken by the Cancer Council and the Australian Department of Health and Ageing shows that it's not just the day, or even several days, at the beach that causes the most sun damage to our skin. The many days spent involved with everyday activities, without adequate protection from the sun, might be even more dangerous. And with most states in Australia now "saving daylight", there is the possibility we will have more usable leisure time in the sunshine.

The "Slip, Slop, Slap" campaign was launched by the Cancer Council Australia more than 30 years ago and has proved to be one of the most successful public health campaigns. The message since then has been slightly modified to incorporate the words "Seek" and "Slide" into the call to action. That is, not only slip on a hat, slop on some sunscreen and slap on a hat, but also seek some shade and slide on some sunglasses.

With regard to sunscreens it's well recognised that they are identified according to the level of protection from sunburn they provide; and this is promoted on labels by way of the Sun Protection Factor or so-called SPF rating.

Until recently the maximum SPF rating permitted to be advertised in Australia was 30+, but now the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) has authorised the display of an SPF rating of up to 50+.

For most Australians, definitely all of us who have inherited the northern European or Anglo/Celtic skin type, a 50+ product should be the sunscreen of choice. One of the advantages of the newly labelled sunscreens is that there is greater certainty that they are truly "broad spectrum". That is they protect against both UVB and UVA wavelengths of sunlight. The old rating was only indicative of protection from the burning UVB rays, however the deeply penetrating UVA rays are equally likely to cause cancer.

All this doesn't mean you have to throw away your present 30+ sunscreen. Many 30+ brands already give at least 50+ protection, and are also broad spectrum. Check with your pharmacist to confirm which products are suitable for you.

If you really want your skin to look darker, using a solarium should not be an option. It's quite clear now that solarium tans are not safe tans. As well as causing immediate skin and eye damage, the UV radiation from solariums can markedly increase your risk of skin cancer. Whatever they are called – solariums, tanning beds, sun-beds or sunlamps – these artificial generators of UV rays are just man-made cancer factories.

Solariums are sometimes advertised as a way to "pre-tan" in anticipation of the hotter weather to come, and so protect your skin from the sun. In fact, tanning without burning can still cause skin damage, premature skin ageing and skin cancer.

If you must have a tan, a fake tan is the best option. There are a number of products your pharmacist can recommend which offer a much safer alternative to the sun-induced or solarium-induced variety.

You can get more advice and a *Sense in the Sun* fact card on how to stay sun smart this summer, from pharmacies providing the Pharmaceutical Society's Self Care health information. Phone 1300 369 772 for the location of your nearest Self Care pharmacy or check out the Pharmaceutical Society website at [www.psa.org.au](http://www.psa.org.au) and click on "Self Care" then "Find a Self Care Pharmacy".