

Don't let sunburn be your summer holiday souvenir

11 November 2016 – Bad sunburn in childhood increases your risk of developing potentially deadly melanoma, prompting warnings for Aussies to ensure sunburn isn't their summer holiday souvenir.

Melanoma Institute Australia CEO Carole Renouf has issued the reminder as the festive season draws closer and families prepare to embark on their annual summer holidays.

'The summer holidays in Australia are renowned for families enjoying long playful days in the sun, surf and sand,' Ms Renouf said. 'Whilst summer holidays are the perfect time to reconnect with family and friends and recharge after a busy year, they are also the prime time for severe sunburn.'

'In addition to being painful, sunburn can have a far more harmful impact. Intense, intermittent exposure leading to sunburn at a young age significantly increases your risk of developing melanoma in the future,' she said.

One Australian dies from melanoma every six hours. Melanoma is the most common cancer affecting 15-39 year-old Australians and the leading cause of cancer death in 20-39 year-olds. The incidence of melanoma in the over 60s is also high, a legacy of sun-damage from decades ago.

Ultraviolet (UV) radiation is damaging to skin cells as it causes mutations in DNA and it also impairs the immune system's ability to repair. Intense, intermittent sun exposure leading to sunburn – particularly in the years prior to puberty – is the most dangerous. Melanoma can develop decades after such exposure.

The real tragedy of melanoma is that it is largely preventable. Sunscreen acts as a barrier, reducing the amount of UV radiation that reaches cells. However, the active ingredients in sunscreen break down quickly, meaning a single application in the morning will not last the whole day. It needs to be reapplied at least every two hours and it needs to be SPF50+.

'People relaxing on holidays tend to get sun-safe before they head out in the morning, but then get caught up in the day's activities and forget the basics like covering up and staying out of the sun during hottest part of the day,' Ms Renouf said.

'I urge holiday-makers to not become complacent and actively take steps to help protect against the serious risks posed by just one bad case of sunburn, particularly to children and adolescents.'

'And when you arrive home is a perfect time to check your skin for any changes. You need to get to *know the skin you're in* and ask family and friends to check places you can't easily see.'

'There are far better souvenirs to bring back from a summer holiday than a bad sunburn, which has the potential for serious ramifications,' she said.

Summer holiday check list

- ✓ Apply and re-apply SPF 50+ sunscreen
- ✓ Wear a broad-brimmed hat, sunglasses and cover up
- ✓ Stay out of the sun during the hottest part of the day

- ✓ Get to 'know the skin you're in', and ask family members or friends to check for skin changes in places you can't see, as melanoma is most common in men on the back and in women on the calves.
- ✓ *Opt for a keyring or fridge magnet as your summer holiday souvenir, don't bring sunburn home with you*

'There are far better souvenirs to bring back from a summer holiday than a bad sunburn.'

Carole Renouf – Melanoma Institute Australia CEO

Did you know that intense sun exposure during childhood years is the most dangerous form of sun exposure? It increases your risk of developing melanoma decades after exposure.

Ms Renouf wants to make sure Aussies remember to take care of our skin as the festive season draws closer and we spend more time in the sun. Read what she has to say here: