



Position statement: UV and sunlight

The problem

Melanoma skin cancer is the third most common preventable cancer in the UK. Its incidence has doubled in the UK since the 1990s to approximately 16,700 cases a year and 2,400 deaths. It is considered 86% preventable.¹

Ultraviolet radiation is a major cause of skin cancer. People who are regularly exposed to strong sunlight, or who use sunbeds, are at higher risk of it.

Recommendations

In the UK, the use of sunbeds is forbidden for children, but other countries go further: Australia has banned commercial tanning salons, for example (although sunbeds may still be owned and used privately). Stricter regulation of sunbed use should be considered in the UK.

Protection for workers who are particularly at risk of prolonged exposure to sunlight, such as construction workers, is currently covered under general health and safety rules, most notably the Health and Safety at Work Act. This imposes a general requirement on employers to assess workers' safety, and take steps to protect it.

Stronger requirements should be considered, such as to provide suitable clothing that is practical and lightweight, while also blocking UV, and/or sunscreen.

About CancerWatch

CancerWatch is an organisation made up of people whose lives have been affected by cancer, who are passionate about eliminating preventable cancers in the future.

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¹ <https://www.cancerresearchuk.org/health-professional/cancer-statistics/statistics-by-cancer-type/melanoma-skin-cancer>