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## Keeping your family safe in the sun this summer

Frequent trips to the beach this summer could mean more than just fun in the sun according to South Western Sydney Local Health District Cancer Services Director Geoff Delaney.

While basking in the sun with family and friends can be a great way to spend the festive season, Professor Delaney said that extended exposure to UV light can also cause skin cancer and premature aging.

“Australian culture involves a great deal of active outdoor activities, which is important for our health and wellbeing,” Professor Delaney said.

“However, everyone needs to remember that skin can burn with just a few minutes of exposure and damage can happen even before the skin starts to show any signs of burning,” he said.

SPF30+ or SPF50+ Sunscreen should be used regularly by people of all ages to prevent skin cancer; including melanoma which Prof Delaney said is dangerous and is usually linked to extreme sunburn.

“It is always wise to spread sunscreen on any skin that’s exposed about 15 to 30 minutes before going outside and then reapply every two hours or after you’ve gone swimming,” he said.

Melanoma, the most serious form of skin cancer, is the fourth most common cancer in the state. Prof Delaney said an estimated 500 SWSLHD residents are diagnosed with melanoma each year but that shouldn’t stop you from catching some sunrays.

“A small amount of sunlight can go a long way, even just 10 minutes a day of sun exposure is enough for our bodies to produce vitamin d, which is needed to maintain a healthy immune system, bones and teeth,” he said.

Professor Delaney said there were five important steps people should take to protect their skin:

- **Shade**  
During daylight saving, the strength of UV radiation is highest from 11am to 3pm. The best thing you can do for your skin is to avoid the sun during this period and seek shade.
- **Protective clothing**  
Wear clothing that covers as much skin as possible, especially your shoulders, arms and legs. The best forms of protective clothing are loose fitting, closely woven fabrics.
- **Broad-brimmed hat**  
A hat with a brim of at least 7cm is a great way to protect not only the top of your head but also your neck, ears and face - parts of the body where skin cancer often occurs.
- **Sunglasses**  
The most effective way to protect your eyes is to wear sunglasses that meet the Australian Standard AS 1067 and wrap around the sides of the face.

- **Sunscreen**

Generously apply SPF30+ broad spectrum sunscreen to your skin, 20 minutes before you head outdoors. Remember to re-apply every two hours.