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Young face skin cancer 'timebomb'

Many young people face the prospect of developing skin cancer if they continue to ignore warnings to protect themselves from the sun, say experts.

A survey by Cancer Research UK found nearly three-quarters of young Britons aged 16-24 who responded want a tan despite the risk of cancer.

Case of life-threatening malignant melanoma have risen 24% in five years.

The charity has joined forces with ministers to launch a new public education campaign.

It says, while young people are constantly warned about the dangers of binge drinking and unprotected sex, not enough is being done to warn them about the dangers of too much exposure to the sun.

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”
Dr Charlotte Proby, Cancer Research UK

Experts are concerned that the growth in foreign holidays, and soaring temperatures in the UK will put more and more at risk.

In 1995 there were 5,626 new cases of melanoma in Britain but by 2000 this figure had risen to 6,967.

Sunbeds

The CRUK survey of more than 1,800 adults found 70.6% of those aged 16 to 24 liked or aimed to get a tan on holiday, with only 7.7% saying they avoided getting a tan.

Young women were the most likely to seek a suntan and more prone to using sunscreen with low SPF levels.

Earlier this month CRUK and the Sunbed Association called for children under the age of 16 to be banned from using sunbeds because the cancer risk was so high.

Sun safety

Stay out of sun 1100-1500 BST
Cover up
Wear sunglasses with UV protection
Never burn
Use factor 15+ sunscreen
Take extra care of children
Do not use sunbeds

[Medical notes: Skin cancers](#)

Scientists believe spending endless hours on a sunbed damages skin cells in the same way as lying unprotected in the sun for too long.

Campaigners called for coin-operated salons to be shut down and urged the introduction of Europe-wide guidelines for all other tanning businesses.

Each year about 1,700 people die from melanoma - the third most common cancer among people aged 15 to 39.

More than 62,500 cases of non-melanoma skin cancer are also recorded in Britain each year.

Dr Charlotte Proby, a leading dermatologist for Cancer Research UK, says: "Many teenagers have grown up with an obsession about getting a tan on holiday. But young skin is very vulnerable to UV radiation.

"Unless young people change their habits and learn to protect themselves properly in the sun we could be heading for a skin cancer time bomb.

"The message is getting through slowly but, as the survey indicates, there is still widespread ignorance about the potential danger of sunburn."

Cancer Research UK and the Department of Health is this year focussing their joint SunSmart campaign on telling young people and mothers of young children how to stay safe in the sun.

Public health minister Melanie Johnson announced the Department of Health was investing £400,000 into the campaign over the next three years.

"When you consider that sunburn in childhood increases the risk of skin cancer in later life, the importance of this SunSmart campaign really hits home."

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/3580315.stm>
