



## Stay safe in the sun!

Summer is here, finally bringing the sun with it! This newsletter looks at the risks of working outside in the summer and how you can keep yourself and the rest of your team safe in the sun.

### Protecting your eyes

It's not just your skin which needs protection from the sun. Protect your eyes if you are out and about in the sun as long-term exposure to sunlight increases the risk of a type of cataract and is also linked to pterygia, growths on the surface of the eye.

**Strong sunlight can burn the eyes.** You might think that the sun doesn't get that strong in Northern Ireland but any over exposure to ultraviolet light without proper eye protection could cause a temporary but painful burn to the surface of the eye, similar to sunburn on the skin.

**Always avoid looking directly at the sun.** Staring directly at the sun can permanently scar the retina, the area at the back of the eye responsible for vision.

**Another risk to eyes is skin cancer,** which can affect the eyelids and area around the eyes. Long-term exposure to the sun can increase this risk.

**Wearing a wide-brimmed hat** can reduce the amount of UV rays that reach your face and eyes.

**Sunglasses can also offer protection** although not all sunglasses are adequate. When shopping for sunglasses, choose a pair that has one of the following:

- the CE Mark and British Standard (BS EN ISO 12312-1:2013)
- a UV 400 label
- a statement that the sunglasses offer 100% UV protection.

**NIE offers field staff wraparound tinted safety glasses, which can be used comfortably with visors. Contact your local Stores for more information.**



### The Sun Factor - use protection!

Sunscreens will not protect us completely from sun damage on their own. However, they can be useful for protecting the parts of skin we can't shade or cover. Always use sunscreens together with shade or clothing to avoid getting too much UV exposure


Always apply sunscreens with a:

- ☑ Sun Protection Factor SPF of at least 15 UVB protection
- ☑ High star rating with at least 4 stars (UVA protection)

UVA protection can also be indicated by the letters 'UVA' in a circle which indicates that it meets the EU standard.

Sunscreens with higher factors don't provide much more protection against UVB radiation. For example, an SPF15 sunscreen filters out 93% of UVB radiation, while an SPF30 sunscreen filters out 96%.

Worryingly, many people burn more frequently when they use higher factors of sunscreen because they stay out in the sun for longer. You should never use sunscreen in order to spend longer in the sun. No sunscreen can provide 100% protection.



Take advantage of our **Stay Safe in the Sun** promotion and put a bottle of high factor suntan lotion in every NIE van. Contact Rachelle Coyle in HR on 32119 to order a bottle.



## And if you do get sunburn . . .

Sunburn is a clear sign that the DNA in your skin cells has been damaged by too much UV radiation. Getting painful sunburn, just once every two years, can triple your risk of melanoma skin cancer.

Sunburn doesn't have to be raw, peeling or blistering. If your skin has gone pink or red in the sun, it's sunburnt.

Sunburn is caused by UV from the sun. You can't feel UV rays – the heat from the sun comes from infrared rays, which can't burn you. This is why people can still burn on cool days. Painkillers, such as paracetamol or ibuprofen, will ease the pain by helping to reduce inflammation caused by sunburn. Sponge sore skin with cool water, then apply soothing after sun or calamine lotion. If you feel unwell or the skin swells badly or blisters, seek medical help. Stay out of the sun until all signs of redness have gone.

## Simple Sunsafe Tips

Follow a few simple precautions to protect your skin from harm during the summer months.

- ⌚ Spend time in the shade between 11am and 3pm or if you do have to be outside, make sure you are covered up.
- ⌚ Make sure you never burn. If you have fair or freckled skin, you are more at risk of skin damage.
- ⌚ Aim to cover up with a T-shirt, hat and sunglasses.
- ⌚ Always use factor 15+ sunscreen and apply before going outside. Use plenty!
- ⌚ Report mole changes or unusual skin growths to your GP.
- ⌚ Reapply sunscreen regularly - it can be easily rubbed or sweated off.



## NIE Health and Wellbeing Forum

Following on from the success of the Health and Wellbeing Fairs in February, the Forum is introducing the *Stay Safe in the Sun* campaign, encouraging our field staff to use protection and put a bottle of high factor sunscreen in every van.

The Forum is also working with ESB to see what initiatives and information they offer to staff.

Contact any member of the Forum if you would like any more information or if you have any health and wellbeing ideas you would like us to consider: Julie Henderson, Rachele Coyle, Philip Nelson, Philip Hall, Andy Wing, Anna Caldwell, Hal Steele and Julia Carson.

## Are you feeling tired?

Heat exhaustion occurs when the body cannot lose heat fast enough. If it's not treated quickly, it can lead to heat stroke, which is a much more dangerous condition. Signs of heat exhaustion include faintness, dizziness, palpitations, nausea, headaches, low blood pressure, tiredness, confusion, loss of appetite and hallucinations.

### What should I do if someone has signs of heat exhaustion?

- ⌚ Get them to rest in a cool place, ideally a room with air conditioning.
- ⌚ Give them plenty of water. Avoid alcohol or caffeine as this can increase levels of dehydration.
- ⌚ Cool their skin with cold water. Use a shower or cold bath to cool them down or, if this is not possible, wet flannels and face cloths in water and apply to their skin.
- ⌚ Loosen any unnecessary clothing and make sure that the person gets plenty of ventilation.
- ⌚ Monitor their condition closely.