Wellbeing

Outdoor Workers and Sun Exposure

What is the problem?

Too much sunlight is harmful to your skin. A tan is a sign that the skin has been damaged. The damage is caused by ultraviolet (UV) rays in sunlight.

Who is at risk?

If work keeps you outdoors for a long time your skin could be exposed to more sun than is healthy for you. You should take particular care if you have:

- fair or freckled skin that doesn't tan, or goes red or burns before it tans
- red or fair hair and light coloured eyes
- a large number of moles

People of all skin colours should take care to avoid damage to the eyes, overheating and dehydration.

What are the harmful effects?

Short Term

Even mild reddening of the skin from sun exposure is a sign of damage. Sunburn can blister the skin and make it peel.

Long Term

Too much sun speeds up ageing of the skin, making it leathery, mottled and wrinkled. The most serious effect is an increased chance of developing skin cancer.

What can you do to protect yourself?

- Ensure appropriate PPE is worn
- Stay in the shade whenever possible and safe to do so (during your breaks and especially at lunch time)
- Use a high factor sunscreen of at least SPF15 on any exposed skin
- Drink plenty of water to avoid dehydration
- Check your skin regularly for any unusual moles or spots. See a doctor promptly if you find anything that is changing in shape, size or colour, itching or bleeding.