

Podcast 11 - Skin Cancer in Australia

by Rob McCormack - Monday, March 25, 2013

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Hi,

Australia is a great place to live. Despite that, there are some diseases in Australia which are caused by our climate and our active outdoor lifestyle. One of those diseases is skin cancer. In this podcast, I would like to tell you a little bit about this disease in Australia, what causes it and how Australians are now changing their lifestyle in order to reduce it.

Australia has the highest rate of skin cancer of any country in the world. Two out of three Australians will be diagnosed with some type of skin cancer before they reach the age of 70.

There are three main types of skin cancer and only one of them is serious. Luckily, the serious type is not very common. The three main types of cancer are basal cell carcinoma (called BCC), squamous cell carcinoma (called SCC) and melanoma. The third type of cancer, melanoma, can be very serious and can lead to death if it is not treated early. The first two types of cancer (called non-melanoma skin cancers) are not dangerous and cannot lead to death. However, they still must be treated.

Non-melanoma cancers are the most common types of skin cancer. In Australia, about 430,000 cases of these skin cancers are diagnosed and treated each year. They usually develop in people who are over 40 years of age. Melanoma is the cancer Australians worry about most. In Australia, there are more than 10,300 cases of melanoma diagnosed and treated every year. Melanoma can develop even in young people.

What causes skin cancer? Well it's quite simple really. The answer is too much exposure to ultraviolet light. That comes from too much exposure to intense sunlight or through the use of tanning machines in a Solarium. Australia has lots of sun and our lifestyle means we are often out in the sun having fun. For example, we like to go to the beach in the summer and to go outdoors for such activities as swimming, camping, bush walking, picnics, barbeques and watching and playing sports. What is more, we like to do these things in the heat of the day.

Since the 1980s, Australian governments have been educating Australians that skin cancer can be prevented. Again, it's quite simple. The answer is to protect your skin from the sun, especially when the sun is most dangerous during the middle of the day. You protect your skin by wearing protective clothing when outside (such as a long sleeve shirt), using a sunscreen lotion or spray and always wearing

a hat when outside, especially during summer.

The government advertisement from 1980 gave the message Slip, Slop, Slap. Slip on a shirt, slop on sunscreen and slap on a hat.

I am 60 years of age now, but when I was a boy growing up in a seaside town in the 1950s and 1960s, nobody knew about the dangers of skin cancer. We went to the beach most days in the summer and never wore a hat, nor a shirt and never used sunscreen lotion. I can remember many times laying in bed with my skin red, burned and painful from a long day at the beach. Now that I am 60 years old, my skin is damaged and I have had many small non-melanoma skin cancers removed from my skin. One on my nose was so large that I had to have a skin graft after it was removed. The doctor performed an operation where he removed the skin cancer from my nose and replaced it with skin from behind my ear (a skin graft).

Today, all Australians are well educated about how to prevent sun damage to their skin. If you drive past a school in Australia, all the children playing outside will have a wide brimmed hat on. That's a good thing. I hope that our children will grow up to have fewer skin cancers than I have had. It means that we can still enjoy the great outdoor life here in Australia, but by being careful, we can ensure we don't get skin cancers as we get older.



If you have a question or a comment to make, please leave it by clicking the comments link at the top of this story. You can leave your comment in English or in any language and I will translate it. Or, you can send me an email at rob@slowenglish.info. I would like to hear any suggestions you may have. I would

especially like your suggestions for podcast topics. Goodbye until next time.

Rob

Vocabulary

active = when you do a lot of things, especially outside

advertisement = a message which tells you to do something. For example, a TV advertisement

camping = when you live out in the open, usually in a tent

climate = the weather

common = when lots of people have it or do it

dangerous = when you might be hurt, or get very sick or even die.

despite = when something is not expected.

diagnosed = when a doctor finds that you have a disease or sickness

diseases = sicknesses. For example, cancer or a cold.

educating = when you learn something

exposure = when your body is not covered and light can shine on it. Usually not a good thing

intense = when something is very strong

lifestyle = how you live

prevented = when something is stopped

protective = something that protects you from something else. For example, clothes protect you from the sun

serious = when something must be treated or you might die

Solarium = a place where you can go to use tanning machines to make your skin go brown

sunscreen lotion = something you spread on your skin. It stops you from getting sunburn

tanning machines = special light machines which make your skin go brown

treated = when a doctor helps you get well again

ultraviolet = the part of sunlight that can damage your skin

wide brimmed hat = a hat which is very wide. It keeps the sun off your face.

worry = when people think about something a lot, something they don't like

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