

Australian coastal and river dwellers at risk of melanoma

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Living by the coast in South Australia increases your risk of melanoma by 41%.
Photo by Veneta Simeonova

(PhysOrg.com) -- South Australians living on the coast, near the River Murray and in metropolitan Adelaide are more likely to get skin cancer than their inland cousins.

Researchers from the University of Adelaide and SA Department of Health say data collected over a 20-year period from 1985-2004 shows that coastal dwellers in particular are 41% more likely to be diagnosed with melanoma.

People living close to the river also have a 19% greater chance of contracting [skin cancer](#) compared to residents living in regional and remote parts of South Australia.

Melanoma specialist Associate Professor Brendon Coventry from the University of Adelaide's Discipline of Surgery says the results indicate that people who live near the coast or River Murray are more exposed to the sun over their lifetime.

The coastal effect may also be explained by greater physical activity outdoors, according to a previous study.

"There is a large elderly population in coastal South Australia and it is important we target melanoma prevention and acute care programs to these areas," Associate Professor Coventry says. "We still have a significant problem with diagnosing melanoma early enough in older men, which could be improved."

Associate Professor Coventry and SA Health colleagues Adrian Heard and Bridget Milanowski analysed melanoma statistics from metropolitan Adelaide and 11 regional centres in South Australia.

"While there was a significant risk in contracting skin cancer for residents living on the coast or near the river, the data wasn't strong enough to show a real difference in melanoma death rates compared to people living inland," Associate Professor Coventry says.

Facts and figures about skin cancer:

- According to Cancer Council Australia, two in three Australians will be diagnosed with skin cancer by the time they are 70 years of age;
- More than 9000 people are treated for melanoma in Australia each year, of which approximately 1200 die;
- GPs in Australia have over 1 million patient consultations per year for skin cancer;

- [Melanoma](#) is the most common cancer in people aged between 15-44 years;
- Australia has one of the highest rates of skin cancer in the world, at nearly four times the rates in Canada, the US and the UK.

Provided by University of Adelaide ([news](#) : [web](#))

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