

Sunscreen can prevent melanoma

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(PhysOrg.com) -- For the first time, researchers at the Queensland Institute of Medical Research (QIMR) have shown that daily sunscreen use can prevent melanoma in adults.

We have always been told to apply [sunscreen](#) to prevent skin cancer but until now the effectiveness of sunscreen's protection against [melanoma](#) has been highly controversial.

“This is the first time that a randomised trial has been conducted that can evaluate if using sunscreen prevents melanoma,” explained lead researcher and Head of QIMR's Cancer and Population Studies Laboratory Professor Adèle Green.

1,621 randomly selected residents from Nambour, Queensland participated in the trial which ran from 1992 to 1996. Half the participants applied sunscreen every day and the other half continued to apply sunscreen as they would normally. After 15 years, the number of people who developed melanomas from the discretionary sunscreen group was twice that of the group who had applied daily sunscreen in the trial.

“By randomly assigning people to the two groups we overcame the bias present in other studies. Often the very people who are predisposed to developing melanomas, eg people with fair skin, are the people predisposed to applying sunscreen and therefore it is impossible to determine if sunscreen is independently able to prevent melanomas.”

“These findings now provide some assurance to medical professionals, public health authorities and the general public, that the regular application of sunscreen is likely to be beneficial with regard to melanoma protection. And while sunscreen use is an important part of [skin cancer](#) prevention, they of course are not the whole solution: other sun protection measures should be continued too.”

“We also presume these results will apply to populations in Europe and North America in summer months or when they travel to sunny countries, which is when their sun exposure increases and risk of melanoma rises as a result.”

“Even though people know the dangers of sun exposure thanks to regular sun awareness campaigns, many people still do not use sunscreen regularly. More behavioural research is needed to understand the barriers to regular sunscreen use,” said Professor Green.

Provided by Queensland Institute of Medical Research

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