

Cancer-causing skin damage is done when young

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With high UV levels continuing in Queensland this autumn, young people are at risk of suffering the worst skin damage they will receive during their lifetime, research from Queensland University of Technology (QUT) has found.

Researcher Professor Michael Kimlin from QUT's AusSun Research Lab said the study found [UV exposure](#) during a person's first 18 years of life was the most critical for cancer-causing skin damage and skin aging.

Professor Kimlin said while people aged over 50 had the slowest rate of skin degradation, results indicated that damage still occurred even at that age, so lifetime sun protection was important.

The study used a unique, non-invasive "UV camera", which took images of skin damage and aging invisible to the naked eye, to measure the relationship between lifetime sun exposure and [skin cancer](#) risk.

Professor Kimlin said the majority of skin damage occurred in the early years of sun exposure, with a much slower increase in damage in subsequent years over the age of 50.

"We looked at how age impacted on the skin damage we saw and found it's not a simple one to one relationship," said Professor Kimlin.

"The message from this research is to look after your skin when you are a child and teenager to prevent wrinkles and [skin damage](#).

"Sun protection when you are young sets you on a lifetime of good skin health."

One hundred and eighty people aged 18 to 83 years old were imaged with the UV camera and interviewed to determine the level of their [sun exposure](#).

The study measured hyperpigmentation of the skin to determine level of damage and wrinkles to indicate skin aging.

Professor Kimlin said using the UV camera meant people's skin could be examined for skin [cancer risk factors](#) without an invasive biopsy.

More information: The research paper will be in the next edition of *Science of the Total Environment* and is available online at www.sciencedirect.com/science/.../ii/S0048969712003312

Provided by Queensland University of Technology

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