

## SunSmart Hats

Skin cancer rates are higher in Australia than anywhere else in the world, with skin cancers accounting for around 80% of all new cancers diagnosed each year.<sup>1</sup> The major cause of skin cancer is exposure to the ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun over many years, particularly during childhood and adolescence.<sup>2</sup> Even if exposure does not cause obvious sunburn, damage still occurs and accumulates over the years. It is never too late to start protecting your skin. Sun protection is important most of the year in Western Australia particularly from September until the end of April.

### Why hats?

Common sites of skin damage and skin cancer are the neck, ears, temples, lips, face and nose. These areas are constantly exposed to the elements and therefore, generally receive more UV radiation than other body parts.

Wearing a hat is one strategy recommended by The Cancer Council Western Australia to protect the face, back of the neck and ears.

Hats should always be used in combination with other forms of sun protection practices such as:

- Seeking shade where possible between 10am and 3pm, particularly from September to April
- Wearing protective clothing—lightweight shirts with high neck collars and long sleeves, long pants or skirts
- Applying SPF 50+ broad spectrum, water resistant sunscreen and regularly reapplying (every two hours).

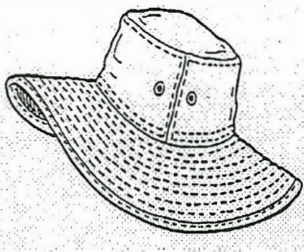
### Which type of hat?

The Cancer Council recommends wearing a hat that provides good shade to the face, back of the neck and ears when outdoors.

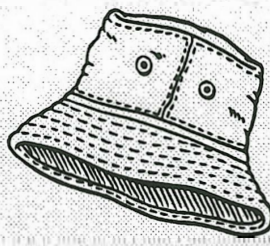
Broad brimmed hats should have a brim **at least 7.5cms** wide. A broad brimmed hat that provides good shade can considerably reduce the exposure of UV radiation to the face.

Bucket or surfie style hats should have a deep crown and sit low on the head. The angled brim should be **at least 6cm** and provide the face, neck and ears with good protection from the sun.

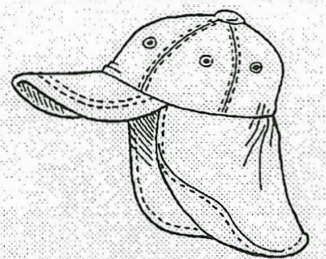
Legionnaire style hats should have a flap that covers the neck and meets the sides of the front peak to provide protection to the side of the face.



Broad brimmed hat



Bucket hat



Legionnaire style hat

Baseball caps and sun visors are **NOT** recommended as they leave the ears and back of the neck exposed. Ventilation should also be a consideration if the hat is to be used during physical activity or warmer weather. Stylish, fashionable hats that meet The Cancer Council recommendations are now widely available.

### UV radiation and temperature

In Western Australia, the UV radiation levels are the highest from September through to the end of April. UV radiation cannot be seen or felt and the intensity of such radiation is not related to air temperature.<sup>3</sup> People often get sunburnt on a cooler day because they tend to stay out in the direct sun for longer rather than seeking shade or covering up as on a hot day.<sup>4</sup>

#### References

- 1 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare & Australasian Association of Cancer Registries 2000. *Cancer in Australia 1998*.
- 2 R Marks, D Jolley, S Leats, P Foley. "The role of childhood exposure to sunlight in the development of solar ketatoses and non-melanocytic skin cancer." *Medical Journal of Australia*, 152 (1990), 62-65.
- 3 D Hill, JM Elwood & DR English (Eds.) *Cancer Prevention – Cancer Causes. Prevention of Skin Cancer*. Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2004.
- 4 R Marks and D Hill. *Melanoma Control, Prevention and Early Detection*, Australian Cancer Society, 1992.