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## **Skin Cancer - "Be Sun Smart & Skin Safe"**

**To: All Branches**

Dear Colleagues,

Temperatures have now risen to the highest of the year and record levels bring dangers with sunlight exposure and dehydration. We want Reps and members to be aware of those risks!

Skin cancer is the most common form of cancer in the UK, and rates continue to rise.

At least 100,000 new cases are now diagnosed each year, and the disease kills over 2,500 people each year in the UK - that's seven people every day.

Whilst we are getting better at understanding how skin cancer works, we still have a long way to go. On average, someone who dies from skin cancer typically loses 20 years of their life, and rates of malignant melanoma are rising faster than any other type of common cancer.

There are three types of skin cancer: malignant melanoma, squamous cell carcinoma (SCC) and basal cell carcinoma (BCC).

You can read more about the types of skin cancer below:

### ➤ **Malignant Melanoma**

Cutaneous malignant melanoma is a cancer of the pigment cells of the skin. If it is treated early, the outlook is usually good. It is not contagious.

Melanomas can come up in or near to a mole, but can also appear on skin that looks quite normal. They develop when the skin pigment cells (melanocytes) become cancerous and multiply in an uncontrolled way.

### ➤ **Squamous Cell Carcinoma**

Squamous cell carcinoma is one of the non-melanoma skin cancers. It is the second most common type of skin cancer in the UK.

Squamous cell carcinomas can occur on any part of your body, but are most common on areas that are exposed to the sun, such as your head and neck (including the lips and ears) and the backs of your hands. Squamous cell carcinomas can also crop up where the skin has been damaged by X-rays, and also on old scars, ulcers, burns and persistent chronic wounds. Squamous cell carcinomas are not contagious.

## ➤ **Basal Cell Carcinoma**

A basal cell carcinoma (BCC) is a type of skin cancer. There are two main types of skin cancer: melanoma and non-melanoma skin cancer. BCC is a non-melanoma skin cancer, and is the most common type (> 80%) of all skin cancer (skin cancer incidence is < 1%) in the UK. BCC are sometimes referred to as 'rodent ulcers'.

Basal cell carcinomas mainly affect fair skinned adults and are more common in men than women. Apart from a rare familial condition called Gorlin's syndrome, basal cell carcinomas are not hereditary. However some of the things that increase the risk of getting one (e.g. a fair skin, a tendency to burn rather than tan, and freckling) do run in families.

UV exposure is the main preventable cause of skin cancer, so here are a few tips on how to stay safe in the sun:

### **Clothing**

Clothing should always be your first line of defense against damage from the sun, with sunscreen being used in addition to clothes, including a hat, t-shirt and UV protective sunglasses. Clothing provided by RM and BT has a high UV ray protective rating.

### **Find the right sunscreen**

Use a sunscreen of SPF30 (SPF stands for 'Sun Protection Factor') and refers to the level of protection against UVB radiation, linked to skin cancer. Look for a four or ideally five star UVA rating on the bottle which will help protect from UVA radiation, associated with skin ageing. You may also find that the UVA rating is represented by the letters 'UVA' inside a circle. (BT provides Sunscreen free – Royal Mail does not – The Union has a long standing claim for Royal Mail to provide it to all outdoor staff free).

### **Get your timing right**

Skin needs time to absorb sunscreen, so apply generously about 20 to 30 minutes before going out. Reapply frequently at least every two hours, as it can come off when sweating or through rubbing.

### **Seek shelter!**

The sun tends to be strongest in the middle of the day, so find some shade typically between 11am and 3pm, especially if you are very fair skinned. Just 10 minutes of strong sunshine is all it takes to burn pale skin. Take breaks in the shade.

### **Water**

Drink plenty of water and avoid dehydration.

See attached CWU Leaflet and Poster and the Royal Mail Leaflet giving advice.

Branches and Regional Health and Safety Forums can purchase additional posters and pocket fact cards from CWU HQ Communications. Contact details for orders: Debby Akerman Post and Repro Department at CWU HQ [dakerman@cwu.org](mailto:dakerman@cwu.org) T: 0208 971 7218.

Yours sincerely



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