

# SunSmart for farmers

Skin cancer is one of the most preventable forms of the disease. Yet there over 11,000 cases diagnosed annually in Ireland and that figure is rising. Here's how to protect yourself against the dangers of sun exposure.

**Francis Bligh**  
Teagasc Health & Safety Specialist



**W**orking outdoors is an everyday part of farming life. It makes farmers the envy of many office or factory workers. The downside is that farmers are exposed to two to three times more ultraviolet radiation (UV) from the sun compared with people who work indoors. UV radiation significantly increases your risk of skin cancer.

Simple steps will help to protect skin from the sun, reducing the risk of skin cancer: UV is a part of sunlight. People often think it is the sun's heat that causes skin cancer, but in fact it is UV rays from the sun which cannot be seen, or felt, that cause the damage.

Follow the SunSmart 5 S's to protect skin from the sun:

- 1** Slip on clothing that covers your skin such as long sleeves, collared T-shirts.
- 2** Spread sunscreen on exposed areas, using factor 30+ for adults. Apply 20 minutes before going outside. Re-apply



Wearing a wide-brimmed hat is one of the SunSmart 5 Ss to protect skin from the sun.



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regularly – more often if sweating.

- 3** Wear a wide-brimmed hat.

**4** Seek shade, especially if outdoors between 11am to 3pm when UV rays are at their strongest. Plan your outdoor work for early in the morning or late afternoon to avoid the peak UV sun rays. Use trees or portable shade for break times and lunch.

- 5** Wear sunglasses to protect your eyes.

The earlier skin cancer is detected, the easier it is to treat. So it's important to talk to your GP without delay if you notice any changes on your skin, or a new or changing mole. It may not be skin cancer, but it is always best to get it checked to be sure.

Dr Una Kennedy, GP advisor to the HSE's National Cancer Control Programme, emphasises that checking your skin regularly for changes is really important to prevent the development of skin cancer.

"Contact your GP if you notice a lump or discoloured patch on the skin," she says. "Look out for new growths, or a sore that does not heal in a few weeks, a spot or sore that itches, hurts, crusts, scabs or bleeds, constant skin ulcers with no other explanation for their cause, and new or changing moles."

To find skin cancer early, it helps to know what your skin and moles normally look like. That way, you'll notice any changes more easily.

To look at areas of your skin that you can't see easily, like the skin on your back, you could try using a hand held mirror and reflect your skin onto another mirror.



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Or you could get your partner, family member or friend to look for you. It is especially important to check your skin regularly if you're often outside in the sun for work or leisure.

You can check the UV forecast for your area on Met Éireann's website or app at [www.met.ie/uv-index](http://www.met.ie/uv-index). More information is available on the SunSmart campaign is available on [www.hse.ie/sunsmart](http://www.hse.ie/sunsmart)