

Sunburn rife as men skimp on sunscreen

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(Medical Xpress) -- Nearly 90 per cent of British adults admit their skin has been sunburnt - with almost half experiencing pain as result of being in the sun.

And among men fewer than half (47 per cent) use at least factor 15 sunscreen compared to two thirds (66 per cent) of women, to protect their skin in the sun.

Men are also less likely than women to protect their skin in other ways - like spending time in the shade or cover up with clothing.

The YouGov survey commissioned by Cancer Research UK reveals today (Monday) that nearly all Brits (96 per cent) are aware that getting sunburnt increases the risk of skin cancer.

Yet for many reasons Brits are still putting themselves at risk of skin cancer by getting sunburnt.

The survey showed that 20 per cent of Britons often don't plan for the weather and get caught without protection if it is sunny while more than a fifth (22 per cent) want to be tanned.

David Denton, 34, from near Halifax in Yorkshire, was diagnosed in February 2009 with malignant melanoma on his face after his dentist persuaded him to get a strange-looking mole checked out.

"I never really thought about the possibility of getting skin cancer even

though I'm fair skinned and burn easily - and I think many men are the same.

"I'm not a sun worshipper, but as a construction site worker I spend about 40 per cent of my working life outdoors. The company I worked for said we had to wear T shirts and long trousers to help protect our skin, but it was still easy to get caught out and forget the strength of the sun sometimes."

David had surgery to remove the melanoma from the side of his face leaving him with a large scar and stretched skin which, he says, looks "as if he's been glassed".

"Whatever they might think, men don't look like wimps if they use sun protection and they certainly don't look good resembling a boiled lobster.

"I am definitely more aware of protecting my skin from [sunburn](#) now, and always remind my mates to put on sunscreen, stick a cap on and keep an eye on their skin.

"I'm lucky that my melanoma was spotted early but the disease can be deadly. Men as well as women should ensure they look after their skin to keep the risk of this awful cancer to a minimum."

Caroline Cerny, Cancer Research UK's SunSmart campaign manager, said: "There's a big gap between what people know and how they behave in the sun. And this report highlights one of the challenges we face in halting the rise in melanoma rates.

"These results indicate that men seem to be worse than women at protecting their skin in the sun.

"Traditionally it's been women who want to sport a suntan but this survey

suggests men crave this look as well but are forgetting to protect their skin.

"Sunburn is a sign that the DNA in your skin has been damaged and people know that getting sunburn can increase the risk of skin cancer but many don't bother to protect their skin from burning."

Over the last 25 years in Britain, rates of malignant melanoma - the most serious form of skin cancer - have risen faster than any of the most common cancers in males and females.

This survey showed that generally women are better at protecting their skin - using sunscreen with at least SPF 15, spending time in the shade and wearing sunglasses.

Five times as many men compared to women said they rely on their partner to remind them to protect themselves in the sun.

Over 50 per cent more men than women forget to protect their skin and, worryingly, 75 per cent more men than women are not worried about getting sunburnt.

Despite more women being diagnosed with melanoma, more men die from the disease.

Public Health Minister Anne Milton said: "We should all enjoy the sun but we all need to be aware of the dangers of too much sun and the increased risk of developing skin cancer. These findings clearly show the importance of men, and women, protecting their skin from sun damage by using sun cream, covering up and spending time in the shade during the hottest part of the day."

Sara Hiom, director of health information at Cancer Research UK said:
"Your skin doesn't have to be red-raw, peeling or blistering to have sunburn damage. If your skin has gone red in the sun, it's sunburnt.

"We all need sunshine for good general health but many cases of melanoma could be prevented if people took more care in the sun. A good way of doing this is to get to know your skin and avoid it going red.

"The British weather causes a dilemma because we don't tend to get many sunny summer days, so when it does shine people tend to overdo it, not realising you can burn even when it's cool or slightly cloudy. Whether at home or abroad, people should think how to use shade, clothing and [sunscreen](#), applied generously and regularly, to protect themselves."

Provided by Cancer Research UK

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