



衛生防護中心  
Centre for Health Protection

# Non-Communicable Diseases

# Aware

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## Healthy Tips

Summertime means fun in the sun, but it also signifies being UV alert.

We have to take appropriate measures to minimize direct exposure of the skin and eyes when staying outdoors, such as wearing long-sleeved and loose-fitting clothing, a broad-brimmed hat and UV blocking sunglasses; applying sunscreen of sun protection factor 15 or above to exposed skin; using an umbrella or seeking shaded area, avoiding staying outdoor or limiting exposure during midday hours.

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## Unintentional Drowning

It was estimated by the World Health Organization that 376 000 people were drowned globally in 2002, making drowning the third leading cause of unintentional injury death after road traffic injuries and falls.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, many people may have sustained brain damage after a non-fatal drowning that results in long-term disabilities.

In Hong Kong, there were 45 registered deaths due to unintentional drowning, giving an overall rate of 0.7 per 100 000 population in 2004. Majority were males (80.0%) and people aged 45 and above (57.8%). The death rate was highest in the 45-64 age group for males and 65 and above age group for females (Table 1). Analyzed by place of occurrence, 68.9% of all fatal drownings happened in natural water. Two deaths (4.4%) occurred in swimming pool, while the rest (26.7%) were classified as other specified or unspecified drownings.

Regarding hospital data, children aged 14 and below accounted for most of the in-patient discharges and deaths attributed to unintentional drowning in Hospital Authority (HA) hospitals in 2004 (11 discharges and deaths, 40.7%). The corresponding rate of in-patient discharges and deaths per 100 000 population aged 14 and below of respective sex was 1.3 for boys and 0.8 for girls (Table 1).

The most significant contributory causes for drowning are insufficient swimming skills, alcohol consumption prior to swimming and a lapse in adult supervision in children.<sup>1</sup> Strategies for drowning prevention in recreational water settings include: be aware that water activities can be dangerous; learn to swim; avoid drinking alcohol before or during water activities; never swim alone and select swimming sites that have life-guard whenever possible; avoid swimming when feeling unwell; make sure an adult is constantly watching children swimming or playing in or around the water. Tips for swimming in natural water also include: know the weather conditions and forecast before swimming, heed beach warning flags and watch for dangerous waves.<sup>2</sup>

**Table 1: Burden of illness due to unintentional drowning and submersion by sex and age group, 2004.**

Age group	No. (rate*) of registered deaths			No. (rate*) of in-patient discharges and deaths in HA hospitals <sup>#</sup>		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
14 and below	2 (0.4)	0 (0.0)	2 (0.2)	7 (1.3)	4 (0.8)	11 (1.1)
15-24	5 (1.1)	0 (0.0)	5 (0.6)	3 (0.7)	0 (0.0)	3 (0.3)
25-44	8 (0.7)	1 (0.1)	9 (0.4)	3 (0.3)	2 (0.2)	5 (0.2)
45-64	15 (1.7)	2 (0.2)	17 (1.0)	2 (0.2)	3 (0.4)	5 (0.3)
65 and above	4 (1.1)	5 (1.1)	9 (1.1)	2 (0.5)	1 (0.2)	3 (0.4)
<b>Total</b>	<b>36 (1.1)<sup>†</sup></b>	<b>9 (0.3)<sup>†</sup></b>	<b>45 (0.7)<sup>†</sup></b>	<b>17 (0.5)</b>	<b>10 (0.3)</b>	<b>27 (0.4)</b>

Notes: \* Rate per 100 000 population in the respective age and sex subgroups. <sup>#</sup> Discharges and deaths are on attendance basis. <sup>†</sup> Total includes unknown age.

Sources: Department of Health; Hospital Authority; Census and Statistics Department.

## References

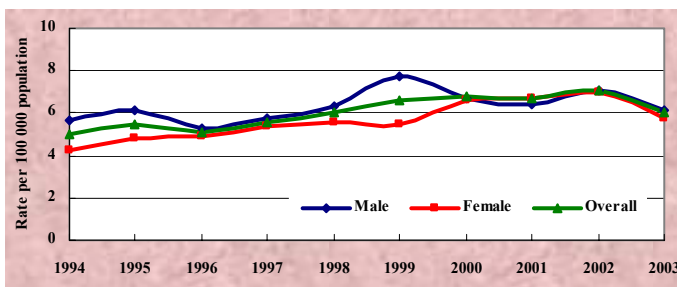
1. Drowning. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2006. Available from [http://www.who.int/violence\\_injury\\_prevention/other\\_injury/drowning/en/](http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/other_injury/drowning/en/) (accessed on 26 June 2006).
2. CDC Quick Tips. Strategies for drowning prevention in recreational water settings. Atlanta: CDC. Available from: [http://cdc.gov/healthyswimming/pdf/cdc\\_qt\\_drowning.pfd](http://cdc.gov/healthyswimming/pdf/cdc_qt_drowning.pfd) (accessed on 26 June 2006).



# Be Sun Smart and UV Alert

Summertime means lots of fun in the sun, but one must stay safe from the ultraviolet (UV) rays emitted from the sun. Appropriate exposure to the sun undoubtedly promotes a sense of general well-being and helps our body produce vitamin D which is important for maintaining healthy bones and minimizing the risk of bone fracture. However, excessive exposure to the sun's UV (including UVA and UVB) radiation can bring about premature skin ageing and serious sunburns. A lack of proper eye protection can also lead to an increased risk of cataract and other eye diseases. Skin cancer is directly related to the amount of sun exposure. Dermatologists believe that there is a link between the frequency of sunburn in childhood and the likely development of melanomas (the most life-threatening form of skin cancer) in later years, particularly those with fair skin.<sup>1,2</sup> It is worth-noting that the age-standardized incidence rate per 100 000 standard population of skin cancer (melanoma and non-melanoma) in Hong Kong increased from 5.0 in 1994 to 6.0 in 2003 (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Age-standardized incidence rate of skin cancer (melanoma and non-melanoma) by sex, 1994-2003.




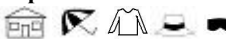
Source: Hong Kong Cancer Registry.

Be sun smart and UV alert! Let us be aware of those misconceptions associated with the sun's UV radiation and sun-tanning (Table 2) and adopt appropriate protective measures.

Misconception	Fact
People will not get sunburnt on a cloudy day.	Up to 80% of solar UV radiation can penetrate light cloud cover. Thus, cloudy weather does not mean people would not get sunburnt.
If people do not feel the hot rays of the sun, they will not get sunburnt.	Heat or high temperatures are not an indication of UV levels. Sunburn is caused by UV radiation which cannot be felt. The heating effect is caused by the sun's infrared radiation and not by UV radiation.
People will not get sunburnt while in the water.	Water offers only minimal protection from UV radiation. In fact, reflections from water can enhance our exposure to UV radiation.
People will not get sunburnt if they take regular breaks during sunbathing.	UV radiation exposure is cumulative during the day.
A sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 30 has twice as much protection as a sunscreen with a SPF 15.	SPF protection does not actually increase proportionately with a designated SPF number. While SPF 15 absorbs 93% of UVB rays, SPF 30 absorbs 97%. In most situations, correct application of sunscreen using a SPF 15 or above that provides broad-spectrum protection from both UVA and UVB should be adequate. Apply liberally and reapply after swimming or sweating.
Sunscreens protects people so they can sunbathe much longer.	Sunscreens should not be used to increase sun exposure time. The protection they afford also depends critically on their correct application.

The UV index is a measure of the potential harm of UV radiation on the human skin. The higher the UV index, the more likely the damage to our body. For Hong Kong, UV index often exceeds 10 on a sunny day in summer. Thus, it is important to be UV alert. People should take appropriate measures to minimize direct exposure of the skin and eyes when staying outdoors, such as wearing long-sleeved and loose-fitting clothing, a broad-brimmed hat and UV blocking sunglasses; applying sunscreen of sun protection factor (SPF) 15 or above to exposed skin; using an umbrella or seeking shaded area, avoiding staying outdoor or limiting exposure during midday hours, i.e. between 10am to 4pm, if possible (Table 3). Of note, children have more tender skin and sensitive eyes. Babies below one year of age must never be exposed to direct sunlight. Parents should teach their children about avoiding sun exposure and the proper sun protection measures. Since May 2006, the Hong Kong Observatory has commenced the UV Index forecast. Forecast of maximum UV index for the next day will be provided at 5 pm every day and such information can be obtained through radio, television, Dial-A-Weather service (1878200) and the Observatory's website (<http://www.weather.gov.hk/wxinfo/uvfct/uvfct.htm>).

Table 3: Recommended sun protection according to UV radiation exposure categories<sup>2</sup>

UV index	Exposure level	Precaution required
0-2	Low	No protective measures against UV radiation required.
3-5	Moderate	Protection required. 
6-7	High	Seek shade during midday hours. Slip on a long-sleeved clothing, slap on hat, wear sunglasses and slop in sunscreen.
8-10	Very High	Extra protection. 
≥11	Extreme	Avoid being outside during midday hours. Make sure you seek shade. Long-sleeved clothing, hat, sunglasses and sunscreen are a must.

References

- Report of Cancer Expert Working Group on Cancer Prevention and Screening. HKSAR: Department of Health; 2004.
- Global Solar UV index: A Practical Guide. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2002.

\* \* \* News Bites \* \* \*

Sunbeds used in solariums and sun-tanning lamps are claimed to offer an effective and harmless alternative to natural sunlight in acquiring a tan for fashion. However, studies indicated a direct link between the use of these UV-emitting tanning devices and skin cancer. The World Health Organization thus recommends against the use of UV-emitting appliances for tanning or other non-medical purpose. (Source: Sunbeds, tanning and UV exposure. Geneva: WHO; 2005. Available from [www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs287/en/](http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs287/en/))

\* \* \* Event Calendar \* \* \*

To promote men's health and women's awareness on the importance of cervical screening, the Department of Health has organized a series of free roving exhibitions for the public. Please visit the websites of the Men's Health Programme at [www.hkmenshealth.com](http://www.hkmenshealth.com) and the Cervical Screening Programme at [www.cervicalscreening.gov.hk](http://www.cervicalscreening.gov.hk) to obtain details for the exhibitions and information on healthy lifestyle for men and prevention of cervical cancer for women.