MAY’23 TOOLBOX TALK – ‘*Skin Cancer Awareness’*

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| **Contributor: Micheal Earley Hegarty Demolition Ltd** |
| A person smiling for the camera  Description automatically generated with medium confidence *“I was young, naïve and loved the sun. Rarely, if ever, did I suffer from sunburn but a phone call in my late 20s changed my ways when I got word that I had melanoma. What is that? I asked.* *I didn’t pass any attention to the risks or preventative measures of sun exposure until that call. Luckily, and following operations and treatment, I am okay, and a priceless lesson was learned. Be smart: Protect your skin.”*  (Micheal Earley, Health and Safety Manager, Hegarty Demolition Ltd.). |
| **Skin Cancer Awareness** |
| * Skin cancer is the most common cancer in Ireland, with over 13,000 new cases diagnosed every year. The National Cancer Registry of Ireland (NCRI) expects this number to double by the year 2040.
* Skin cancer is a disease of skin cells. 9 out of every 10 cases are caused by UV rays from the sun or sunbeds.
* Not all the causes of skin cancer are known but many cases of skin cancer occur in those areas of the body heavily exposed to sunlight over the years. A high percentage occurs among those who have outdoor occupations, particularly if they are fair skinned.
* The most common forms of skin cancer, basal cell and squamous cell, are 95 percent curable with early diagnosis and surgical removal. The least common form, melanoma, is very serious and has a survival rate after five years of 63 percent, about the same as breast cancer.
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| **Signs of Possible Skin Cancer** |
| * The earliest symptom is typically a change in an existing mole or a new mole arising.
* The development of a new pigmented or unusual-looking growth on your skin.
* The below mentioned strategies helps discriminate the melanoma from other skin cancers. The ABCDE’s of melanoma helps identify the disease condition.
	+ **Asymmetry**: The mole may not be uniform; one half looks different from the other half.
	+ **Border irregularity**: The moles may be uneven or notched.
	+ **Colour**: The moles may be of different colours and irregular patterns.
	+ **Diameter**: The mole may be bigger in size, measuring at least 6mm.
	+ **Evolving**: The mole may be changing colours, size and texture and might also bleed.
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| **Causes of Skin Cancer** |
| Melanoma is caused by a problem in the melanocytes, the pigment producing cells. The exact cause is unknown, though environmental and genetic factors play a role. Risk factors include:* Exposure to UV (ultraviolet) radiation.
* Gene mutation.
* Fair skin.
* Family history increases the risk.
* Weakened immune system.
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| **Control Measures** |
| The key skin cancer prevention behaviours adapted for the Irish population are: * **Know the UV index**: When the UV index is 3 or above, you need to protect your skin. In Ireland, the UV index is usually 3 or above from April to September, even when it is cloudy. Stay safe by limiting time in the sun when UV is strongest, typically between the hours of 11:00am-3:00pm.
* **Slip on clothing**: Cover skin as much as possible, wear long sleeves, collared t-shirts, clothes made from close-woven material that does not allow sunlight through.
* **Put on a broad-spectrum (UVA/UVB) sunscreen**. Apply sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 30+ for adults and 50+ for children, with high UVA protection, and water resistant. Reapply regularly. No sunscreen can provide 100% protection; it should be used alongside other protective measures such as clothing and shade.
* **Protect your face, ears and neck**.
* **Do not deliberately try to get a suntan**.
* **Avoid getting a sunburn**. Workplaces to provide sunscreen for their employees.
* **Never use a sunbed**.
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| **For Further Information:**  |
| * **HSE Skin Cancer Prevention:** <https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/5/cancer/prevention/skin-cancer-prevention-sunsmart.html>
* **Irish Cancer Society:** <https://www.cancer.ie/cancer-information-and-support/cancer-types/skin-cancer>
* **Dept. of Health:** <https://assets.gov.ie/10881/3ab68311928e4afd9c2e3602dd4f00fc.pdf>
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