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Holidays May Be Over But Being SunSmart is Still Important At School

With children back at school it's timely to remember the importance of being SunSmart even though the holidays are over.

Judy Gould, Waikato/Bay of Plenty Cancer Society Chief Executive, says in terms one and four children attend school during the hours when UV radiation is at its highest between the hours of 10am and 4pm.

“New Zealand has one of the highest rates of skin cancer in the world and it is widely recognised that over exposure to the sun and harmful UV rays play a significant role in this. For this reason it is important that schools encourage SunSmart behaviours and keep children safe in the sun.”

To assist schools the Cancer Society has developed the SunSmart Schools Accreditation Programme.

Schools need to implement a SunSmart policy during terms one and four that encourages SunSmart behaviours such as wearing broad brimmed, bucket or legionnaire hats, clothing and sunscreen and seeking shade during peak UV hours of 10am to 4pm to achieve accreditation as a SunSmart School.

It also includes creating a SunSmart environment that promotes the provision and use of shade as well as rescheduling outdoor activities outside peak UV times.

Curriculum content on how to be SunSmart is also part of the accreditation programme which is reviewed every three years.

Mrs Gould says the programme has been running in the Waikato and Bay of Plenty for the past 18 months and there has been an excellent response by many primary and intermediate schools in becoming accredited as SunSmart schools.

“It's wonderful to see so many schools actively working to keep children safe from the sun. Ultimately we would like to see every school in our region be a SunSmart School.”

The accreditation process is fairly straightforward and is designed to be undertaken on-line through the SunSmart schools website with assistance from a school's local Cancer Society.

The website provides schools with SunSmart information, curriculum materials and draft policy information.

“We realise how pressured schools are but we know that being SunSmart is vitally important to the ongoing health of our young people. Our Cancer Society health promoters are also here to help schools as much as possible with the process.”

For more information, please visit: www.sunsmartschools.co.nz

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