

## MEDIA RELEASE

Thursday 23 September, 2010

### Kiwis remain at risk of sunburn in spring!

Daylight saving starts this Sunday and it's a timely reminder we need to dig out our sunhats, wrap-up clothing, sunglasses and sunscreen.

Spring is the time when many New Zealanders can unwittingly get sunburned, as Ultraviolet Radiation (UVR) levels are rapidly rising but temperatures can be cool, even on sunny days. UVR from the sun, which is the cause of burning, is not related to heat or high temperatures. You can still get sunburned on a cool or cloudy day. This makes New Zealand a challenging environment for sun protection because even on cool or cloudy days, the UVR levels can be strong enough to damage skin. UVR increases significantly across much of the country in spring.

A new international report details the success of worldwide efforts to protect the ozone layer - the shield that protects the Earth from harmful levels of ultraviolet rays. The report concludes that as a result of the phasing out of ozone-depleting substances, under the Montreal Protocol, the ozone layer outside the Polar Regions is projected to recover to its pre-1980 levels some time before the middle of this century.

But, the ozone layer will recover at different speeds, in different parts of the globe and a delayed recovery of Antarctic ozone has implications for New Zealand due to our proximity to the Antarctic. "Even if the ozone fully recovers worldwide the intensity of our UVR will continue to be much higher than at similar latitudes in the Northern Hemisphere," says Dr Richard McKenzie, NIWA's UVR scientist.

Dr Judith Galtry, the Cancer Society's Skin Cancer Advisor, notes that, "while the report paints a hopeful picture globally, in terms of ozone layer repair, New Zealanders remain at high risk of sunburn and skin cancer. So it's just as important as ever to adopt sun protection strategies, *especially* between 11am and 4pm or when the UV Index (which measures UVR levels) is 3 or above."

The Cancer Society advises that between September and March, you should:

- Wear clothing that covers as much skin as possible, hats that protect the face, ears and neck and wrap around sunglasses
- Use SPF 30+ water resistant sunscreen, and reapply every two hours especially after swimming or being in water
- Seek shade

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Executive Summary of the Scientific Assessment of Ozone Depletion 2010 Report (World Meteorological Organization & United Nations Environment Programme, 16 September 2010)

**Key findings:**

- Over the past decade, global ozone and ozone in the Arctic and Antarctic regions is not decreasing but is not yet increasing.
- As a result of the phase-out of ozone depleting substances under the Montreal Protocol, the ozone layer outside the Polar Regions is projected to recover to its pre-1980 levels some time before the middle of this century. The recovery might be speeded up by greenhouse gas-induced cooling of the upper stratosphere.
- The springtime ozone hole over the Antarctic is expected to recover much later.
- The impact of the Antarctic ozone hole on surface climate is becoming evident, leading to important changes in surface temperature and wind patterns.
- It reaffirms at mid-latitudes, surface UVR has been almost constant over the last decade.
- In Antarctica large UV levels continue to be seen when the springtime ozone hole is large.

**What is Ozone?**

Ozone is found throughout the atmosphere, but most of it is in the higher atmosphere. Ozone acts like a giant shield against the sun's harmful rays.

For further information:

[http://www.cancernz.org.nz/assets/files/info/Information%20Sheets/IS\\_TheOzoneLayerandUVR\\_Jul10.pdf](http://www.cancernz.org.nz/assets/files/info/Information%20Sheets/IS_TheOzoneLayerandUVR_Jul10.pdf)

Daily forecasts of UVI are available for New Zealand locations at:

<http://www.niwa.co.nz/our-services/online-services/uv-and-ozone/forecasts>

Or to find the forecast maximum Ultraviolet Index measure for your town:

<http://www.sunsmart.org.nz/uvj>