

## Skiers advised to remember of Skin Cancer danger

20.01.10

The message of applying sun cream regularly when on holiday in a hot climate is well known and heavily publicised, but the warning of the dangers of sun damage when in a cold climate is not so common. The average holiday skier would not think of sun cream when almost covered head to toe in thermal and waterproof ski clothing. However the Medical Research Charity RAFT ([www.RAFT.ac.uk](http://www.RAFT.ac.uk)) warned today that the risks of getting burnt and suffering from skin damage when enjoying winter sports can be as high as when on summer holiday.

RAFT's Skin Cancer experts are concerned with the fact that not enough holiday makers are warned of these dangers, and often are completely unprotected whilst on the slopes.

Levels of skin cancer have been increasing so rapidly that it is now the most common cancer in the age group 15-34; RAFT believes that it is essential that the public have the necessary information in order to protect themselves in all conditions. In order to achieve the desired protection RAFT advises applying two layers of sun cream with a SPF factor of 15 or higher that protects from both UVA and UVB radiation before venturing out into such conditions.

With more than 67,000 new cases of skin cancer in the UK each year, 8,900 of which are malignant melanoma – the most dangerous type of skin cancer, all precautions must be taken to tackle the problem. At present, prevention is the best form of attack that is available, therefore educating members of the public of the dangers of skin damage while skiing is imperative, due to the difficulty of treating the cancer. Melanoma is the most difficult to treat, being resistant to radio- and chemotherapy. This is proved by the fact that over 1,800 people die from melanoma each year. That is 5 people per day.

The tanned goggle look is a common sight at any ski resort, but what people do not realise is that where the skin has tanned, skin damage has occurred and can lead to Skin Cancer.

“The dangers of UV exposure are much greater when participating in Winter sports, as the UV radiation is reflected from the snow or ice, and UV is stronger or more intense at altitude than it is at ground level. So during periods when you are not covered up and without appropriate protection, skiers are much more likely to receive skin damage than usual”, says RAFT's CEO, Leonor Stjepic.

Scientists know that when in regular conditions UV radiation is absorbed by grass and trees, but when your surrounding areas are covered in snow, the UV radiation is not absorbed but reflected working as a form of mirror. People participating in Winter sports often forget this fact and do not protect areas like under their chin or nose.

Nick Southwell, ([www.southwellenterprises.com](http://www.southwellenterprises.com), [www.whiteworld.tv](http://www.whiteworld.tv)), considered one of the top British Freerider skiers on the World Tour, and a highly respected professional skier and cameraman not only in Europe but globally, advised that “The Mountains are a place where I believe people don't look after their skin in the way they should. The reflection of the sun on the snow is lethal and awareness of this fact is very poor.

Ski teachers are slowly getting better about warning people of the dangers but they are by no means doing this enough, I believe a responsible teacher should always carry a spare sun cream to give to their client in case that they didn't bring their own.

I believe in time resorts themselves will also start to have warning boards about the sun and its potential dangers if you don't wear sun cream.

My personal tip is to first of all make sure you wear high factor and ideally snow specific sun cream in every weather condition. Sometimes cloudy days are the days where people get most burnt. Make sure you also top this up at lunch.

Another tip is to help keep your face covered; I always wear goggles over glasses due to the extra covering they provide on ones face.

Also people have to realize that taking care of your skin whilst on a ski holiday is a lot more important than just simply striving to get that perfect ski tan.”

The Cosmetic, Toiletry and Perfumery Association (CTPA), the UK trade association representing manufacturers and suppliers of cosmetic and personal care products, says:

“CTPA is extremely pleased to see RAFT's initiative highlighting the dangers of sun exposure when skiing.

In order to help protect against the damaging effects of the sun it is important to have a sun-safe regime, which includes protecting yourself from the sun when skiing. Sun protection products can be a useful part of this routine. Snow reflects up to 90% of UV radiation and, in addition, UV radiation increases by 20% for every 1000m above sea level. For this reason, sun protection is important in snowy conditions. Even in winter, there is sufficient UVB at skiing heights to cause severe burning. As a consequence, full precautions against UV damage should be taken, including sunscreens, appropriate clothing and goggles.”

CTPA has a consumer website ([www.thefactsabout.co.uk](http://www.thefactsabout.co.uk)) which has more information on sunscreens and sun-safe advice.

**LEONOR STJEPIC**  
Chief Executive

RAFT  
Leopold Muller Building  
Mount Vernon Hospital  
Northwood  
HA6 2RN

Tel. +441923 835815  
Email: [ceo@raft.co.uk](mailto:ceo@raft.co.uk)  
[www.raft.ac.uk](http://www.raft.ac.uk)

**CHARLIE HARRISON**  
Public Relations

Pelham Public Relations  
12 Arthur Street  
London  
EC4R 9AB

Tel. +442073 371554  
Email: [Charrison@pelhamellpottinger.co.uk](mailto:Charrison@pelhamellpottinger.co.uk)