

Survivors of childhood cancer should take extra care of their skin

Young people often don't protect themselves enough

Summarized by Carina Nigg & Paul Castle

Why did we do this study?

Everybody should protect their skin. That is even more important for people who had cancer as children. The treatment sometimes make their skin more sensitive. That is why they need to take special care. But we wanted to know if they really do so.

Why is this important?

Nowadays, most children who get cancer survive. But compared to other people, they are slightly more likely to get skin cancer later on. That is particularly the case for children who had radiotherapy or a stem cell transplant.

Two things are important here for childhood cancer survivors: They should *protect themselves from the sun* especially well. They should also *watch out for problems* – which means having their skin checked every year. But until now, nobody has looked whether that actually happens in Switzerland.

What exactly did we do?

We asked people who had childhood cancer how well they protect themselves from the sun. We also asked if they regularly get their skin checked.

We contacted 3'578 people taking part in the Swiss Childhood Cancer Survivor Study. We each asked them three questions:

- 1) Do you protect yourself well from the sun?
- 2) Did you have sunburn last year?
- 3) Has a doctor checked your skin as a precaution?

What did we find out?

The answers were clear: Many survivors do not protect themselves enough from the sun.

20% of the people we asked do not use any skin protection. One-third of the people had sunburn last year. Adolescents, in particular, do not protect their skin enough.

Our study also showed that many people do not take precautions seriously enough. Even survivors who had radiotherapy or a stem cell transplant do not get their skin looked at often enough. Only one in five has a skin check-up every year.

These answers show that there is still a lot of room for improvement.

What do we recommend now?

Healthcare providers need to talk with survivors and their families about sun protection and skin cancer prevention.

Parents and children can also do a lot themselves. They can read the [Swiss Cancer League](#) info (*in German, French or Italian*). Above all, they should use sun cream and protect their skin with clothing. They can also look at their skin carefully and go for a specialist check-up once a year. Protection and prevention help people to keep healthy for longer.

Reference: Nigg C, Žarković M, Jörger P, Tinner EM, Mazzara C, Brack E, Castle P, Navarini A, Schindera C, Kuehni CE. Sun protection and skin cancer screening after childhood cancer—a report from the Swiss Childhood Cancer Survivor Study (SCCSS). medRxiv. 2025 Nov 17. doi: 10.1101/2025.11.15.25340311

[Here is the full article in English](#)

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