

## British Skin Foundation

### PRESS RELEASE

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## Over half of all winter sports holidays end in sunburn

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An alarming new survey revealed that over half of those who go on winter sports holidays from the UK result in one or more cases of sunburn.

The online snapshot survey, conducted during December 2011 by the skin disease research charity the British Skin Foundation (BSF), reveals a nation whose attitudes towards sun safety and sunburn during their winter sports holidays left a lot to be desired.

A total of 231 people were asked a series of questions relating to their habits during their time either skiing or snowboarding both in and outside the UK. 54% of all respondents said they had either been sunburnt once or 'more than once but infrequently'. Shockingly 3.5% said they allowed themselves to get sunburnt 'very frequently' whilst on winter sports holidays.

One in eight people (12%) said they do not bring sunscreen with them on a winter sports holiday, of which almost four in ten people believed they did not need to bring or use it. However, the amount of UV radiation that reaches the earth's surface increases by up to five per cent for every 1,000 feet above sea level. What's more, water reflects as opposed to absorbs UV radiation, a common misconception about water's role in sunburn, further increasing the risk of sunburn.

Although the nature of snowboarding and skiing means that clothing tends to cover up a large proportion of the body, there are still areas that are typically left exposed. UV rays can penetrate through cloud and fog and depending on the age of the snow, around 50 to 90 per cent of UV radiation is reflected, putting areas such as the chin, tip of the nose, ears and any exposed part of the face or body at increased risk of sunburn.

Sunburn is believed to be contributory factor to developing skin cancer at a later stage. Every year there are about 100,000 new cases diagnosed in the UK, and in 2010 alone, there were a total of 2071 deaths from malignant melanoma, the deadliest form of the disease, in England, Wales and Scotland.

Although those who participated in the survey were fairly savvy in relation to the amount of protection they were seeking through their sunscreen - over half said they used an SPF of 30 or higher - reapplication of sunscreen remained an issue. 39% said they only applied it once before heading outside, despite it being likely

that they would be out for long amount of time, and the physical nature of their outdoor activities would likely mean a lot of their initial application would be removed through sweating, rubbing and wiping.

A spokesperson and dermatologist for the British Skin Foundation, Dr Bav Shergill says of the survey: “We need to be as vigilant with regards to sun safety on the slopes as we are out and about during the summer. Skin cancer does not discriminate as to whether you get sunburnt on a beach in Greece or on a mountain in Austria.

“The danger here is the false belief that as it is winter and the fact that most of their body is covered with sports clothing that we don’t need to bother with sunscreen. We’ve all seen people coming back from holiday with the panda eyes effect caused by sunburn whilst skiing or snowboarding, and we need to try and stop that from happening. We know sunburn increases the risk of developing skin cancer at a later stage, so it’s best to be prudent and bring as well as use sunscreen frequently on exposed parts of the skin.”

#### **Top tips for skiers and snowboarders**

- Apply sunscreen to all exposed parts of the body, including the face, making an extra effort on areas that are typically missed, like the nose, chin and ears.
- Take a small bottle of sunscreen with you to be able to re-apply every couple of hours, especially after wiping off sweat.

#### **Key findings from the snapshot survey on winter sports holidays:**

- 12% of respondents said they do not take sunscreen with them on winter sports holidays, of which almost 36% said they believe they did not need it.
- 25% said they have been sunburnt once. 29% said they had been sunburnt more than once but infrequently.
- A further four in ten (39%) said they only apply sunscreen once in the before heading to the slopes, though a more sensible 47% said they applied ‘frequently throughout the day’
- 3.5% of respondents said they never apply sunscreen, even if they have brought it with them.
- 35% said they used a sunscreen with an SPF of 30, with a further 24% using an SPF of 50 or higher.
- The majority of respondents (almost 70%) were aged 26 to 45.

**-Ends-**

**For further comment on the issue, or to talk to Dr Bav Shergill, please contact Bevis Man, Communications Manager at the British Skin Foundation on 0207 391 6347 or email [bevis@britishskinfoundation.org.uk](mailto:bevis@britishskinfoundation.org.uk)**

The British Skin Foundation (BSF) is a charity committed to raising funds for skin disease research. 100% of the money raised for the charity goes back into funding vital research. To date the BSF has awarded in excess of £8.1 million to 260 separate pieces of research. To find out more about the BSF visit [www.britishskinfoundation.org.uk](http://www.britishskinfoundation.org.uk)