Precautionary advice:
Energy saving compact fluorescent lights

This factsheet provides some precautionary advice about the use of compact fluorescent lights (CFLs) in the home.

CFLs and ultraviolet radiation

The Health Protection Agency has carried out research which shows that some energy saving light bulbs emit ultraviolet radiation which could, under certain conditions, expose people above recommended guideline levels.

As an interim precautionary measure, until the problem has been solved, the Agency is advising that some types should not be used closer than 30cm (1 ft) for long periods of time.

If you have energy saving compact fluorescent lights in your home you don't need to worry unless you are using a lamp containing one of the open (single envelope) bulbs shown in figure 1 closer to your skin than 30cm (1 ft) for more than an hour a day.

If you do need a lamp this close for a prolonged period then we suggest you change the bulb and use a low energy bulb of the encapsulated (double envelope) type shown in figure 2. Alternatively, simply move the lamp until it is at least 30cm (1 ft) away.



Figure 1. Open bulb



Figure 2. Encapsulated bulb

Both types of bulb are fine for any use further away than 30cm (1 ft). This is precautionary advice and people should not be thinking of removing these energy saving light bulbs from their homes. For both children and adults 30cm (1 ft) is a safe distance from the compact fluorescent light bulb.

Light sensitivity

People who suffer from Lupus and other light sensitive conditions may be specifically affected by the emissions from compact fluorescent lights. They have to be very careful about their exposure to sunlight, so also need to be cautious about their use of compact fluorescent lights.