

9 Weeks of Summer – Week 3

Sun Safety



Sun safety is absolutely critical not just for the kids, but the entire family as well.

Did You Know

- Skin cancer is the most common cancer diagnosed in Canadians. The **main cause of skin cancer is too much UV radiation.**
- Skin cancer is one of a small number of cancers that can be prevented through simple measures such as limiting sun exposure, seeking shade, wearing hats and clothing, and using an SPF 30 or higher broad spectrum sunscreen.
- One blistering sunburn can **double a child's lifetime risk** of developing skin cancer.

The health effects of UV radiation are serious. Exposure to UVA and UVB radiation can cause skin damage, eye damage and weaken the body's immune system. However, UV radiation can also be beneficial. We require UVB for the production of vitamin D₃ in our bodies. Vitamin D₃ helps the body absorb calcium and phosphorus and plays a crucial role in skeletal development, immune function and blood cell formation.



Is a Suntan Healthy?

There is no such thing as a healthy suntan. Any change in your natural skin color is visible proof that your skin has been damaged from UV radiation. Tanning occurs when the skin absorbs UV radiation. This causes an increase in the activity and number of cells that make the pigment, **melanin**. Melanin helps to block out damaging UV.

UV exposure causes damage in the DNA of our skin cells. Either those damaged cells die or they get repaired by the cell's own repair mechanism. But if the damage is too severe and the cells cannot repair it adequately, this can result in the development of **skin cancer**. Overexposure to UV radiation also causes **premature aging effects** such as skin wrinkling and hardening (leathery skin), blotchiness, loss of elasticity, dark patches ("age spots") and precancerous skin changes (called *actinic keratoses*).

Sunscreen

How do I choose a sunscreen?

Look for a product with a minimum SPF of 15 that says UVA *and* UVB. UVA rays penetrate more deeply into the skin and are responsible for premature aging and contribute to the development of skin cancer. Sunscreens that are labelled "**broad-spectrum**" help protect against both.

What is an SPF?

SPF relates to the amount of time it takes for your skin to burn without any protection and how long it would take if you used the appropriate amount of sunscreen. An SPF 15 product filters out more than 93% of the UVB in sunlight allowing about 7% penetration. An SPF 30 filters out 97% and allows 3% penetration. Stated differently, SPF 30 allows only half the UV penetration.

When should I put on sunscreen?

You should apply sunscreen generously and evenly about 30 minutes before sun exposure to allow the active ingredients to bond to your skin. A second application 20 minutes later will maximize the protection from your sunscreen. Reapply every two hours or after swimming or sweating a lot.

In a Nutshell...

1. Limit time in midday sun, between 11am and 4 pm.
2. Wear a generous amount of proper sunscreen in addition to sun protective wear.
3. Check the UV index each day. An index of 3 or higher means you must wear sunscreen in addition to protective clothing and sunglasses.

Sunscreens are not intended to increase sun exposure time. They are meant to increase protection during unavoidable exposure.