

SUMMERTIME HEALTH

SUN SAFETY

Did You Know?

- Skin cancer is the most common cancer diagnosed in Canada. The main cause is too much UV radiation.
- Skin cancer is one of few cancers that can be prevented through simple measures like limiting sun exposure, wearing protective 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.

Sun safety is critical, not just for children, but for the entire family. The health effects of UV radiation are serious. Exposure to UVA and UVB radiation can cause skin damage and eye damage and weaken the body's immune system. On the other hand, UV radiation can be beneficial. We require UVB for the production of vitamin D3, which 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's no such thing as a healthy tan. Any change in natural skin colour is visible proof that your skin has been damaged by UV radiation. Tanning occurs when the skin absorbs UV radiation, which causes an increase in the activity and number of cells that make the pigment, **melanin**.

UV exposure causes damage to the DNA of our skin cells. Damaged cells die or are restored by their own repair process. If the damage is too severe and the cells cannot be repaired, this can result in the development of **skin cancer**. Overexposure to UV radiation also causes **premature aging effects** such as skin wrinkling, hardening, blotchiness, loss of elasticity, dark patches (age spots), and pre-cancerous skin changes called *actinic keratoses*.

All About Sunscreen

How do I choose a sunscreen?

Look for 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 labeled **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 protection, and how long it would take with the appropriate amount of sunscreen. SPF 15 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 your time in the midday sun, between 11 am and 4 pm.
2. Wear a generous amount of proper sunscreen in addition to protective clothing.
3. Check the UV index. An index of 3 or more means you need sunscreen, protective clothing, and sunglasses.

Sources: www.dermatology.ca, www.hc-sc.gc.ca, www.epa.gov/sunwise

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