



# Working TOWARD Wellness

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PROVIDED BY HEART HEALTH ACTION WINDSOR-ESSEX  
AND THE WINDSOR-ESSEX COUNTY HEALTH UNIT

## SUN SENSE



Many more Canadians are developing skin cancer compared to less than a generation ago. Between 1989 and 2000, the number of reported cases almost doubled to more than 71,000 cases. Since 1988, there has been an increase in the number of deaths from melanoma of 41% for men and 23% for women. Melanoma is the most deadly form of skin cancer.

Researchers believe that over exposure to UV (ultraviolet) radiation causes skin cancer. They link the increase in the prevalence of this disease to the fact that more people are being over exposed to UV radiation.

Both lifestyles and environmental factors account for this over exposure. For instance, changes in the atmosphere's ozone layer of the atmosphere now allow more UV radiation to reach the surface of the earth. Also, we spend more time working and playing outdoors, especially after a long Canadian winter which often leads to greater exposure to the sun and its UV rays.

Prevention of skin cancer starts early in life because up to 80% of a person's lifetime exposure to UV radiation occurs by 18 years of age. However, no one is completely safe from the sun, including people with darker skin.

But the good news is, unlike many other types of cancers, almost all skin cancers are preventable. As well, early detection can greatly reduce the risk that someone will die from the disease.

Read on for more on how to protect yourself and your family while working or playing in the sun.

### TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE! T F

- |   |                       |                       |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. A tan protects you from sun damage.  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 2. Special sun safety precautions for children and babies are important because they have sensitive skin. | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 3. Staying in the shade reduces your risk of UV ray over exposure.  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 4. The higher the UV index, the more sun protection you need.   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 5. The best time of day to avoid the sun is between 11 a.m. and 1 p.m.                                    | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 6. Tanning beds provide the same UV exposure as sun bathing.  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 7. Dark skinned people do not need to use sunscreen.  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 8. Wearing a wide brimmed hat is an important step in protecting yourself from the sun.                   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 9. You can't get sunburned on a cloudy day.   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 10. Sunscreen is the best protection when out in the sun.   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

see answers on back panel

### Benefits of Protecting Yourself from the Sun

- Reduces the risk of developing skin cancer.
- Reduces the risk of eye damage or cataracts.
- Reduces water loss from skin to help prevent pre-mature aging and wrinkling of the skin
- May help keep your immune system healthy.
- Helps prevent painful burns and blisters
- Sets an good example for others, especially our children.

*Note: A certain amount of UV exposure helps build strong bones by activating the vitamin D (found naturally in our skin) to increase the body's ability to absorb calcium.*



# Why DO YOU NEED PROTECTION FROM THE SUN?

Sunlight contains ultraviolet (UV) rays. Repeated exposure to UV rays is the most common cause of skin cancer in humans. Of all cancers, skin cancer is the most frequent cancer diagnosed in North America.

Basically, there are three kinds of skin cancer. Basal cell carcinoma and squamous cell carcinoma are more common but are rarely lethal. However, these skin cancers cause disfigurement.

A third type, malignant melanoma, is very serious and even life threatening.

The risk of developing malignant melanoma is related to genetic and personal characteristics (e.g. fair skin type) as well as a person's exposure to UV rays. With each sun exposure, and with each tan, skin cells are damaged or destroyed. Some cells can repair themselves while others cannot. Skin cancer can even occur in people who

have dark skin. Over exposure to UV rays can also lower the immune system's ability to protect us from other diseases.

The risk of over exposure to UV rays from the sun is an issue of growing concern because of our depleting ozone layer which naturally absorbs UV rays. The risk is also high for those who spend long periods outside or who have had several sunburns as a child.

# How CAN YOU REDUCE YOUR

## GET STARTED

First, you should know the facts about ultraviolet (UV) radiation. There are two types that are hazardous to your health: UVA and UVB.

Both come through the ozone layer of the atmosphere and reach the earth's surface, even on cloudy days. Both cause changes to our bodies, including sunburns, tans, freckles, moles and/or skin cancers and cataracts. UVB rays are the most dangerous to our health.

With the increasing depletion of our ozone layer, and with more leisure time spent outdoors, people need to become more aware of how much they are exposed to UV rays. Then, they need to take steps to reduce their exposure for themselves and their families.

## TAKE STEPS

The Canadian Cancer Society recommends following these SunSense guidelines to reduce the risk of skin cancer and other harmful effects of the sun's UV rays:

- 1. Limit** sun exposure between 11 a.m. and 4 p.m. In Canada, the sun's rays are strongest and most harmful from May to August. If you can, plan your outdoor activities for non-peak sun times.
- 2. Seek** shade or create your own. Shade allows you to enjoy outside activities while limiting your exposure to UV rays.
- 3. Slip** on clothing that is tightly woven (heavy cotton, polyester, etc.), lightweight, as dark in colour as possible and loose fitting to cover your arms and legs. Clothing blocks the UV rays before they reach your skin.
- 4. Slap** on a wide-brimmed (3-4 inches) hat to protect your head, face, neck, and ears. Legionnaire-style hats with the flap at the back and sides are also appropriate. Although baseball caps are very popular, they don't protect your head, neck and ears which are the places where most skin cancers occur.
- 5. Slop** on sunscreen with an SPF of 15 or higher. Sunscreens are chemical

agents that provide protection by being absorbed into the skin to block UV radiation. Look for "broad spectrum" on the label to indicate protection against both UVA and UVB rays. You should apply it 20-30 minutes before going outside, and re-apply often - at least every 2 hours, or after a swim or other activity that makes you sweat. But remember, no sunscreen can block ALL the sun's rays. Sunscreens, together with protective clothing and when necessary, sun avoidance, are the best ways to be sun smart.

- 6. Keep** babies less than one year old out of direct sun.
- 7. Tanning beds** and sunlamps produce UVA rays which damage the skin. No tan is a safe tan. In fact, tanning beds may provide 5 times more UVA than the sun! Ask a dermatologist to suggest a self-tanning cream that may be a safer alternative.

# What DO YOU NEED TO DO TO PROTECT YOURSELF?

You need to protect yourself from getting too much UV ray exposure. Other than avoiding the sun completely and staying indoors 24 hours a day, you need to think about how you will deal with being active and/or working outdoors under the sun during the summer.

There are a variety of ways to do this. But, keep in mind that no one method will likely be totally effective or practical enough to adequately reduce your exposure. All it takes is a little planning and some common sense.

This is also an opportunity to be a good role model for your children. If you work outdoors, you may even encourage your co-workers to practice better sun safety habits.

# Go for it!

## RESOURCES and WEBSITES

Canadian Cancer Society  
519 254-5116 - Windsor  
[www.cancer.ca](http://www.cancer.ca)

Canadian Dermatology Association  
1-800-267-3376  
[www.dermatology.ca/](http://www.dermatology.ca/)

American Academy of Dermatology  
[www.aad.org/skncnrUpdates.html](http://www.aad.org/skncnrUpdates.html)

Environment Canada  
[www.msc-smc.ec.gc.ca/education/uvindex/index\\_e.html](http://www.msc-smc.ec.gc.ca/education/uvindex/index_e.html)

Healthy Ontario  
[www.healthyontario.com](http://www.healthyontario.com)  
enter "sunburn" and search entire site

The Weather Network  
<http://www.theweathernetwork.com/weather/cities/indexcan.htm>

The World Health Organization  
UV index site  
<http://www.who.int/peh-uv/>

[www.wehealthunit.org](http://www.wehealthunit.org) and at  
[www.windsor-heart-health.com](http://www.windsor-heart-health.com)

## EXPOSURE TO UV RAYS?

Other important steps to sun safety include:

- Wear sunglasses with both UVA and UVB protection and have medium dark lenses (grey, brown or green).
- Always carry sunscreen and lip balm with you during the day, and re-apply them often.
- Know your skin. The Canadian Dermatology Association recommends monthly self-exams of moles and freckles on your body. Report any changes to your doctor.
- Avoid sun exposure during peak UV times. Environment Canada publicizes a daily UV index. Check your local radio, TV and internet sites for daily reports.

### UV INDEX

The UV Index is a measure of how much of the sun's burning UV rays can reach the earth's surface. Here is quick reference that describes what you should do to protect yourself depending on the UV rating given for that day:

Rating	Number	What to do
Low	less than 4	If outdoors more than 1 hour, wear sunscreen and sunglasses.
Moderate	4 - 6.9	Find shade, wear a hat, sun glasses, clothing and sunscreen.
High	7 - 8.9	Avoid sun between 11 a.m.- 4 p.m. Take precautions as above.
Extreme	over 9	Skin damage can happen quickly. Most important to reduce time spent in the sun.

# CLIP & KEEP THIS INFO!

## Choosing and Using a Sunscreen

- SPF (sun protective factor) indicates how much UVB radiation is blocked.
- The higher the number, the greater the sun protection. Choose a sunscreen that is endorsed by the Canadian Dermatology Association.
- Check the label to ensure that it protects against both UVA and UVB rays and has an SPF of 15 or higher.
- Use waterproof sunscreen when in water.
- Apply sunscreen generously at least 20-30 minutes before going outside.
- Apply sunscreen to all exposed body parts, but especially to ears, nose, forehead and neck.
- Re-apply sunscreen often - at least every 2 hours, after a swim or other physical activity that makes you sweat.
- If you tan or burn while using a sunscreen, your skin likely needs a higher SPF. Try a 30 SPF or higher.
- Do not use combination sunscreen/DEET insect repellents because the sunscreen's effectiveness is reduced. Instead, apply sunscreen first, wait 20-30 minutes, then apply the insect repellent to exposed areas.
- No Sunscreen can not block 100% of all UV rays.

**REMEMBER** - The best ways to be sun smart are to use sunscreen together with protective clothing and when necessary, stay out of the sun.

## Pass it on!

Please feel free to copy any articles in this brochure as long as you acknowledge the source.

# Make it happen at your workplace!

Whether you are on your break or working outside as part of your job, being exposed to too much UV radiation from the sun is a health hazard. Here are some suggestions to encourage and support sun safety in your workplace:

- Set up an area to display sun safety information.
- Provide adequate shade for outdoor break areas such as umbrellas on picnic tables.
- If adequate shade is not possible, encourage employees to take breaks indoors during peak UV exposure times (11 a.m. - 4 p.m.), or when the UV index is high or, consider rotating workers between indoor and outdoor activities to reduce the length of time spent working in the sun.
- Consider providing protective clothing, hats and sunglasses for employees who work outdoors.
- If your workplace has a dress code policy, consider including guidelines that include sun safety practices for outdoor workers.
- If outdoor work is required, provide sunscreen (SPF 15 or higher) approved by the Canadian Dermatology Association.
- Consider re-scheduling outdoor work to non-peak UV radiation times or, if possible, move the work to a shady location.
- Provide sun safety training for employees.
- Plant more trees. They may not provide a lot of shade in the short term but they will contribute to air quality.
- Ensure that employees drink plenty of cool, non-caffeinated beverages when it is hot and humid.

*"We can work, play and have fun in the sun  
until the skin damage is done. Be sun smart...  
Protect Yourself!"*

Anonymous

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Answers (from front page): 1-F • 2-T • 3-T • 4-T • 5-F • 6-F • 7-F • 8-T • 9-F • 10-F

For more information about the Workplace Health Promotion Program, contact the Windsor-Essex County Health Unit at 258-2146, Ext. 3100



This brochure and others in this series available online at:  
[www.wehealthunit.org](http://www.wehealthunit.org) and at [www.windsor-heart-health.com](http://www.windsor-heart-health.com)