

Sun Care, Be Aware

National Summer Safety Week

Participating in activities and sports outdoors during the summer months is an important part of a healthy lifestyle. But most importantly, you must remember to protect your skin from harmful ultra-violet (UV) rays.

During National Summer Safety Week the Canada Safety Council encourages you to protect yourself in the sun all summer long. Always apply plenty of sunscreen before going outside, whether it's sunny or cloudy, hot or cool. Make sure it has a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 15 against both UVA and UVB rays. Use it generously (approximately a golf ball sized amount) and re-apply after swimming and exercise.

Nearly one in five Canadians is likely to develop skin cancer sometime during their lives. Melanoma – the most dangerous type of skin cancer – is the type most likely to be fatal. It makes up one to two per cent of all cancers, and incidence rates continue to increase with every passing year. It is also one of the most common cancers among young people in Canada aged 15 to 29. Young women seem to be the most vulnerable to melanoma. For the year 2009, the Canadian Cancer Society had estimated that 940 Canadians, or three people a day, would die from melanoma and 5,000 more would be diagnosed with it. The good news? Skin cancer is almost totally preventable.

When you get a sunburn, the long-term effects of skin injured by the sun can be very serious. The more time young people spend unprotected in the sun, the higher their risk for developing skin cancer later in life. Dermatologists describe a burn as being the skin cells' response to injury. Getting a tan also injures skin cells. When skin cells are damaged, skin cancer can result from these irreparable cell mutations.

Outdoor physical activity can be healthy, fun and safe if you remain protected. Follow the *Canada Sun Guide*, created by Canada Safety Council and others partners, to help Canadians combine sun safety with outdoor activities.

Minimize Sun Exposure

- Schedule outdoor physical activities when UV rays are at their weakest – before 11:00 a.m. and after 4:00 p.m., especially between the months of April and October.
- Always keep children under the age of one out of the sun.
- Remember that skin doesn't have to be hot to burn, so don't be fooled by cloudy or overcast weather.
- Remember too that water, snow, sand and concrete can reflect and increase the sun's burning rays.

Seek and Create Shade

- Seek natural shade from trees and buildings.
- Plant trees in schoolyards and other play areas.
- Use shade umbrellas, or create other forms of shade if natural shade is not possible.
- Keep playpens, strollers and carriages in shaded areas.

Cover Up

- Cover children's heads, necks and ears with a broad brimmed hat when outdoors.
- Protect arms and legs with tightly woven, loose fitting, cotton clothing.
- Children should wear a T-shirt over their bathing suit, and long shorts instead of short shorts.
- Wear UVA/UVB protective sunglasses—children can wear them too.

Use Sunscreen

- Have children use a broad spectrum sunscreen (protects against both UVA and UVB rays) with an SPF of 15 or more.
- Apply sunscreen generously before all outdoor physical activities such as swimming, skateboarding, biking or even walking. Remember to apply at least 20 minutes before sun exposure. Reapply often, as perspiration will reduce the effectiveness.

Pay attention to the UV Index – a measure of the strength of the sun's burning ultraviolet rays. The higher the number, the stronger the sun will be. UV rays usually reach their peak around noon, so minimize exposure to the sun in the middle of the day. When you are outside, stay in the shade, and make it a habit to wear a wide-brimmed hat, long sleeves and protective sunglasses.