



Sun Sense



People of all ages enjoy spending time outdoors. Often it can be easy to forget that something as simple as getting fresh air or playing outside can cause harmful health effects if we do not know how to protect ourselves.

Practising sun sense is a simple way to enjoy the outdoors while at the same time protecting yourself and your family from the harmful health effects from overexposure to direct sunlight.

UV Index

Environment Canada's UV Index predicts the strength of the sun's daily ultraviolet rays. By understanding the UV index you will be able to determine how to best protect yourself and your family from the sun.

SUN SENSE TIPS

- ⚙ If possible, plan your outdoor activities before 11 a.m. or after 4 p.m., or any time of the day when the UV index is 3 or less.
- ⚙ Whenever possible, seek shade as protection from the sun.
- ⚙ Keep babies under 12 months out of direct sunlight.
- ⚙ Wear broad-spectrum sunscreen with an SPF of 15 or higher.
- ⚙ Wear clothing that is loose fitting, tightly woven and light weight.
- ⚙ Wear a hat that protects the face and the back of the neck.
- ⚙ Don't forget your sunglasses.
- ⚙ Avoid indoor tanning.
- ⚙ Check your skin regularly for spots, moles, or blemishes that are unfamiliar.

UV Index	Reading	What you can do to protect yourself.
Low	0 - 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimal sun protection required for normal activity. • Wear sunglasses on bright days. If you're outside for more than one hour, cover up and use sunscreen. • Reflection off snow can nearly double UV strength. Wear sunglasses and apply sunscreen.
Moderate	3 - 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take precautions – cover up, wear a hat, sunglasses and sunscreen – especially if you're outside for 30 minutes or more. • Look for shade around midday when the sun is strongest.
High	6 - 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You need protection – get out the sunscreen, hats and cover up. UV damages the skin and can cause sunburn. • Try and stay out of the sun between 11 a.m. and 4 p.m. and take full precautions – seek shade, cover up, wear a hat, sunglasses and sunscreen.
Very High	8 - 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extra precautions required – unprotected skin will be damaged and can burn quickly. • Avoid the sun between 11 a.m. and 4 p.m. and take full precautions – seek shade, cover up, wear a hat, sunglasses and sunscreen.
Extreme	11+	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A UV Index of 11 or more is very rare in Canada. However, the UV Index can reach 14 or more in the tropics and southern U.S. • Take full precautions. Unprotected skin will be damaged and can burn in minutes. Avoid the sun between 11 a.m. and 4 p.m., cover up, wear a hat, sunglasses and sunscreen • White sand and other bright surfaces reflect UV and increase UV exposure, so follow all the precautions you would when you're at home.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. What is SPF?

A. SPF stands for sun protection factor. The SPF represents the length of time that sunscreen-protected skin can be exposed to UVB radiation before redness appears, compared to the length of time it takes on unprotected skin.

However, SPF is an approximation, and actual results are dependent on many variables. The amount of solar energy you are exposed to depends not only on the amount of time you spend in the sun, but also the time of day, geographic location, skin type, amount of perspiration and weather conditions. Also, people usually use far less sunscreen than the amount used in the SPF lab testing.

Q. What is the difference between UVA and UVB rays?

A. There are actually three types of ultraviolet radiation, classified according to their wavelength. UVA rays make up most of the sun's natural light; penetrate deep into the skin, causing wrinkles and aging as well as immediate tanning. UVB are responsible for delayed tanning and burning, enhances skin ageing and significantly promoting the development of skin cancer. There are also UVC rays, but you don't need to worry about them since the atmosphere filters UVC rays out.

Q. Is sunscreen all I have to wear to protect myself from the sun?

A. No. You should use a broad-spectrum sunscreen in addition to practicing other sun safe behaviours. The best protection is to reduce the time you spend in the sun by seeking shade or staying indoors, especially between 11 a.m. and 4 p.m. Also, wear light, loose clothing that covers up your arms and legs and choose a wide-brimmed hat.

Q. Doesn't a "base tan" protect my skin from becoming burned in the future?

A. The myth of a "base tan" is just that – a myth. A tan offers very limited protection from sunlight or burning. At most, a tan is the equivalent to a sunscreen with an SPF of 2-4. Not enough to keep you safe in the sun.

Q. How does the sun cause skin cancer?

A. The sun's ultraviolet radiation penetrates the skin and harms the DNA within the cells of the skin. In the short term, sunburns and suntans result from sun exposure. Both are signs of skin damage. However, repeated exposure over the years may result in sun-induced skin changes such as wrinkles, spots, uneven skin colour and skin cancer.

Q. What type of sunscreen should I use?

A. Whether you buy a spray, lotion, or gel sunscreen is

really a matter of preference. The best sunscreen is the one that you like and will use.

If you use a spray sunscreen, be sure to apply it while outside or in a well ventilated area and avoid inhaling the spray.

Always use a broad-spectrum sunscreen that blocks out both UVA and UVB and has an SPF of 15 or higher (use SPF 30 or higher if you will be out in the sun for an extended amount of time). Apply the sunscreen thickly and evenly to all exposed parts of your body at least 30 minutes before going outside. Pay particular attention to the most exposed parts such as ears, nose, forehead and neck. You should re-apply the sunscreen every two hours, especially after swimming or other sporting activities. Use a lip balm with an SPF of 15 or more as well.

Don't store sunscreen in the car and other places, where temperatures may get high. Heat may change the chemical composition of sunscreens, which reduces the effectiveness of the product. Likewise, the chemical composition of sunscreens can change with age, and it may no longer perform as stated on the bottle so be sure to check your sunscreen's expiration date.



Links

<http://www.cancer.ca>

http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/index_e.html

http://www.dermatology.ca/english/public-patients/spotcheck_e.html



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