

# SUN SAFETY FACT SHEET

## Why do I need to think about sun protection?

Melanoma is a very serious form of skin cancer and is one of the fastest growing cancers worldwide. It makes up only 3-5% of skin cancers, but accounts for 75% of the deaths that occur. This disease is of great concern to young people as melanoma is one of the most common types of cancer for youth between the ages of 15–29, and is also the most preventable. Having one blistering sunburn when young can double an individual's chance of developing melanoma later on in life. Therefore, sun safety prevention and early detection is important in order to prevent further skin cancers and melanomas.



## What should I know about exposure and time in the sun?

When outside and the Ultraviolet (UV) Index is 3 or higher, there is a high risk of harm to unprotected skin and eyes. The UV Index regularly reaches 3 and higher between the peak hours of 11:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. (daylight savings time [DST]; 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. standard time), from March to October on sunny and cloudy days. The UV Index regularly reaches 5 and higher between 11:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. from May to August, but rarely exceeds 10 in Canada. Infants, young children and people with fair skin that burn easily are especially vulnerable to UV exposure.

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### UV INDEX

**1-2**  
**LOW**

**3-5**  
**MEDIUM**

**6-7**  
**HIGH**

**8-10**  
**VERY HIGH**

**11**  
**EXTREME**

What can I do to help keep myself and my child safe in the sun?

**There are 5 easy things you can do:**

1. Avoid the sun between the hours of 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. If you must be in the sun, seek shade.
2. Wear a broad-brimmed hat.
3. Wear 100% UVA and UVB protective sunglasses.
4. Use sun-protective clothing that covers as much of your body as possible.
5. Apply broad-spectrum sunscreen of at least SPF 30.

How do I pick a sunscreen that will help protect myself and my child from ultra-violet radiation?

**Here are some things to keep in mind when choosing a sunscreen:**

- Use sunscreens that have a sun protection factor (SPF) of 30 or higher. SPF 30 sunscreens block approximately 97% of the sun's rays. Higher number SPF's block slightly more of the sun's rays but no sunscreen can block 100% of the sun's rays. High-number SPF sunscreens last the same amount of time as low-number SPF's
- Sunscreens should be broad spectrum – this means that they will protect you from both UVA and UVB rays.
- Look for sunscreens that are water resistant. Sunscreen should be re-applied approximately every two hours when outdoors, even on cloudy or cold days, and after swimming or sweating.
- Be sure to read the expiration date on the bottle. Sunscreen loses its effectiveness over time.
- Sunscreens come in a variety of formulations. Find one that suits you best.

When should I be wearing sunscreen?

- Sunscreens should be used on exposed skin not covered by protective clothing, which offers more effective skin protection. Make sure to apply on vulnerable areas like ears, feet, lips and nose.
- Apply sunscreen everyday when outdoors. The sun emits harmful ultraviolet (UV) rays all year round.
- Use a generous amount of sunscreen. Reapply sunscreen based on activity level, immediately after swimming, toweling off or sweating heavily.
- Applying sunscreen about 15 minutes before going outside helps your skin to absorb it before exposure, but once outside, it's not too late to apply. Health Canada recommends reapplying sunscreen every two hours.

Now that I understand the dangers of UV, do we need to stop spending time in the sun?

No, you do not need to stop spending time in the sun. We encourage all Canadians to enjoy the outdoors but to be SUN SAFE and SUN AWARE. Make sure to follow all 5 sun safe behaviours, and enjoy your time outdoors.

I know we get necessary vitamin D levels from sun exposure. Doesn't this mean my children and I should be spending time in the sun?

There are safer ways to maintain healthy vitamin D levels than receiving it from ultraviolet (UV) exposure. You can achieve the target levels of vitamin D through your diet and by taking a supplement. The following sources are recommended sources of vitamin D: fatty fish, fish liver oil and egg yolk. Milk and margarine, soy milk, some fruit juices, cereals, yogurts and cheeses are also sources of vitamin D.

**For more information visit [screenme.ca](https://screenme.ca)**

