



The Canadian Dermatology Association urges Canadians to protect themselves from skin cancer this summer

OTTAWA / May 1 / 2024 – The Canadian Dermatology Association (CDA) has launched its annual month-long Sun Awareness Campaign. This year is focused on protecting children and adolescents; the campaign encourages Canadians to not only educate themselves on effective sun protection behaviors but also to embrace lifestyle changes that contribute to long-term skin health. Through a combination of educational resources, community engagement initiatives, and strategic partnerships, the CDA envisions a proactive and united front against the preventable risks of skin cancer, especially among the most vulnerable demographic.

It is estimated that “approximately [80% of lifetime sun exposure](#) occurs before the age of 18 years,” (Stern RS, Weinstein MC, Baker SG. Risk reduction for nonmelanoma skin cancer with childhood sunscreen use. *Arch Dermatol.* 1986;122:537–545). “...[UVR-induced skin changes](#) and associated photodamage may begin as early as the first summer of life, before infant skin has accommodated to the environment and before natural photoprotection is fully developed,”(Nikolovski J, Stamatias GN, Kollias N, Wiegand BC. Barrier function and waterholding and transport properties of infant stratum corneum are different from adult and continue to develop through the first year of life. *J Invest Dermatol.* 2008;128(7):1728 –1736).

The CDA recommends parents take the following steps to protect youth:

- Avoid sun exposure during hours of peak UV intensity, which usually is between 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.
- Seek shade when outdoors
- Wear protective clothing, a broad-brimmed hat, and UV-protective sunglasses
- Use sunscreen with a minimum sun protection factor (SPF) of 30

As always, early detection is key, and everyone should regularly perform a skin evaluation and see a [Certified Dermatologist](#) if they spot something suspicious.

“Children’s skin is more susceptible to UV damage and skin cancer. In addition, the amount of sun exposure acquired by children and adolescents tends to be over 50% of their lifetime cumulative sun exposure! Canadians at risk should increase their awareness of sun protection behaviours and modify their lifestyle practices to prevent skin cancer and other possible harmful effects of excessive ultraviolet exposure,” says Dr. Sunil Kalia, national chair of the CDA Sun Awareness Working Group and Associate Professor at the University of British Columbia.

“As we launch this year's Sun Awareness Campaign, our focus is squarely on the well-being of our youth,” says CDA President Dr. Michele Ramien, a Clinical Associate Professor at the Alberta Children’s Hospital in Calgary, Alta. Her practice is focused on clinical care of medically or dermatologically complex children. *“We believe that informed communities and parents can make a substantial impact in reducing the incidence of skin cancer, particularly when it comes to our children and adolescents,”* added Dr. Ramien.

2023 CDA Sun Safe Behaviour Survey

The latest public opinion survey commissioned by the CDA in September 2023 revealed some positive trends. The top concerns for Canadians exposing themselves to the sun continue to be sunburn and increased risk of skin cancer.

Positive Findings

- More parents recognize the importance of applying sunscreen before heading outdoors (83% parents vs. 72% of those without children).
- Overall parents seem to be more concerned with preventing acne breakouts, a sentiment that extends to their selection of sun protection products. Parents have better habits when it comes to reapplying sunscreen.

Findings of concern

- More parents believe sun exposure causes irreparable damage to the skin (87% vs. 80% of those without children), yet an increasing amount of them still enjoy being in the sun despite its risks (70% vs. 58% of those without children).
- A higher proportion of parents think sunscreen may cause damage to the environment (59% vs. 49% of those without children) and admit that the impact sunscreen has on the environment deters them from using it (29% vs. 21% of those without children).
- Significantly more parents believe that sun protection in the winter is not necessary (34% vs. 26% of those without children), or that when skin is tanned or skin tone is naturally dark, it’s not as important to apply sunscreen (32% vs. 23% of those without children), and having a tan is important to them (45% vs. 34% of those without children).
- Fewer parents try to avoid sun exposure between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. (46% vs. 58% of those without children).
- Other concerning beliefs that more parents hold than those without children include that when it’s cloudy outside, there is no need to use sunscreen (44% vs. 29%), getting a sunburn is the first step to getting a suntan/makes you tan faster (29% vs. 20%), and there’s no need to wear sunscreen in the winter (36% vs. 27%).

For more details, access the [2023 SUN SAFE BEHAVIOUR SURVEY](#).

Important Dates

- Sun Awareness Month (May 1-31)
- CDA's Third Annual "Check Your Skin Day" (May 5)
- Week 1 (May 1-3): Launch of campaign, Release of Ipsos Reid Survey Results
- Week 2 (May 5-11): Why are children and youth important to target?
- Week 3 (May 13-17): Healthy Sun Protection Habits
- Week 4 (May 20-24): Targeting youth outdoor workers in high sun exposure environments
- Week 5 (May 27-31): Look For the Logo Program

For more advice from the CDA on protecting yourself from melanoma and other skin cancers, visit dermatology.ca

About the Canadian Dermatology Association

Established in 1925, the Canadian Dermatology Association (CDA) is a member organization that **advocates** for dermatologists across Canada, underscoring their essential role in the healthcare system. As a community of Certified Dermatologists, we are dedicated to advancing the science of dermatology encompassing over 3000 skin, hair and nail conditions. Our commitment extends beyond professional **support**; we also **protect** and educate the public through comprehensive educational initiatives and our product recognition program.

To learn more about CDA initiatives, visit dermatology.ca and join the conversation on our social media channels.

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