

## Fact Sheets

## sun & uv awareness

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## Know the Skin You Are In

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Learn what to look for and check your skin regularly. Most skin cancers can be cured if they're caught early enough.

First of all you're going to need a room with good lighting and a mirror, and preferably someone who can check those hard-to-see places, like your back and back of your neck. Check your body top to bottom - don't forget your palms, the soles of your feet, your ears, and your scalp.

### What you're looking for:

- birthmarks or moles that have changed in shape, colour, size, or surface area
- any new skin markings (moles, blemishes, colorations or bumps)
- any sore that doesn't heal
- any patch of skin that bleeds, oozes, swells, itches, or becomes red and bumpy

A normal mole is a nice brown or black colour, it can be flat or slightly raised, and is usually round or oval. Most moles are around 2.5 cm (1 inch) across, or about the size of a pencil eraser. They can show up anytime, and usually stay the same for years.

### To check if your mole is suspicious, use the ABCDE rule:

<b>A = Asymmetry</b>	The shape on one side is different from the other side.
<b>B = Border</b>	The border is irregular, ragged, and imprecise.
<b>C = Colour</b>	The mole has multiple colours –tan, brown, black, red, pink, or white areas.
<b>D = Diameter</b>	The diameter or width increases (usually greater than the size of a pencil eraser)
<b>E = Evolution</b>	A change in the size, shape, surface (especially bleeding), or colour. It may also feel different (possibly itchy or tender).

If you notice changes or are confused about what you should be looking for, ask your doctor for help.

#### Sources:

[Canadian Dermatology Association](#)

[Canadian Cancer Society](#)

[American Cancer Society](#)

## Sun Essentials

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Nobody wants to stay inside when the sun is shining, but nobody wants sun damage either. Safe-sun practices can protect you and your family from the less appealing and more dangerous effects of the sun. Any sun exposure is potentially harmful, especially when the UV index is high, so plan ahead before you go out, even on a cloudy day (UV rays can penetrate clouds, fog, and haze). Every skin tone – light, dark and in-between -- needs protection from the sun's damaging rays.

### What You Can Do

- Before going outside, check the weather forecast for the **daily UV Index**. On days when the UV Index reaches 3 (moderate) or more, you need to be extra careful to protect your skin. In Canada between April and September, the UV Index can be 3 or more from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., even when it's cloudy.
- Try to reduce your time in the sun between **11 a.m. and 3 p.m.** – when the sun's rays are at their strongest – or any time of the day when the UV Index is 3 or more.
- **Find shade.** Remember, if your shadow is shorter than you, it's time to find some shade or go inside. If you can't find shade, create your own with a sun umbrella. If you can see the sky from your shady spot, you still need to cover up with clothing, a hat, sunglasses and sunscreen. UV rays can reach you in the shade by reflecting off surrounding surfaces.
- **Cover up.** One of the best ways to protect yourself from the sun is to cover up. Cover up as much of your skin as you can with tightly woven or UV-protective labelled clothing. Clothes provide better protection than sunscreen. Hats with a large brim that covers your head, face, ears, and neck give the best protection. Hats like baseball caps won't give you enough.
- **Wear sunglasses.** Sunglasses can help prevent damage to your eyes by blocking a large percentage of UV rays. Keep your shades on and make sure your children wear them too. Sunglasses don't have to be expensive to be effective, but make sure you choose close-fitting ones with UVA and UVB protection in a wrap-around style. The label might have UV 400 or 100% UV protection on it.
- **Use sunscreen properly.** Apply plenty of broad-spectrum sunscreen to the most exposed parts of your body. That includes your face, ears, neck, shoulders, back, knees, and the tops of your feet. Your sunscreen should have a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 30. Apply a generous amount of sunscreen. If you forget to put it on before going outside, it's not too late! Put it on as soon as you can and reapply according to the directions, especially after swimming or sweating. If the first sunscreen you try isn't right for your skin, try other products until you find one that works best for you. Talk to your pharmacist if you need help choosing a sunscreen

## Children are Especially at Risk

Children should wear a t-shirt over a swimsuit, along with a sunhat and sunscreen. If children aren't swimming, they should wear a long-sleeved shirt.

Babies need extra protection because their skin is very sensitive. In fact, it's best to keep babies out of direct sunlight. Use clothing that covers their arms and legs, add a hat, and put on a little sunscreen. Put the stroller or playpen in the shade, under trees or an umbrella.

**Source:** Canadian Cancer Society, [Being Safe in the Sun](#)



## Sun and UV Protection for Outdoor Workers

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Working outdoors puts you at a higher risk of developing skin cancer because you are regularly exposed to the sun for long periods of time. Adding to the danger is the fact that outdoor workers are often in the sun when its ultraviolet (UV) radiation is at its strongest, between 11 am and 3 pm or when the UV Index is 3 or more, generally between April and September. Before going outside, check the weather forecast for the daily UV Index. On days when the UV Index reaches 3 (moderate) or more, you need to be extra careful to protect your skin.

### Who is at Risk?

Anyone who works in agriculture or horticulture, maintenance workers, anyone working on the water, lifeguards, athletes, military and police personnel, construction workers, postal workers, and those working in logging and mining are all at a higher risk of developing skin cancer. These industries all involve a significant amount of time outdoors.

### There are some things that you can do to reduce your risk:

- Before going outside, check the weather forecast for the daily UV index.
- Try to limit the amount of time you work outdoors in the sun between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m.
- Seek shade — from buildings, trees, canopies, etc. — as much as possible, especially during lunch and coffee breaks.
- Wear clothing that covers as much of your body as possible. Fabrics that are made from a tightly woven fabric and UV protected labelled work best. Clothing provides better protection than sunscreen.
- Wear a wide-brimmed hat or brimmed hard hat that covers your head, face, ears and neck. Attach a back flap to a construction helmet to cover the back of your neck and attach a visor for your face. Hats like baseball caps won't give you enough protection. Put sunscreen on your ears, chin and neck even when you're wearing a hat.
- Sunglasses or safety glasses can help prevent damage to your eyes by blocking a large percentage of UV rays. Sunglasses don't have to be expensive to be effective, but make sure you choose close-fitting ones with UVA and UVB protection in a wrap-around style. The label might have UV 400 or 100% UV protection on it.



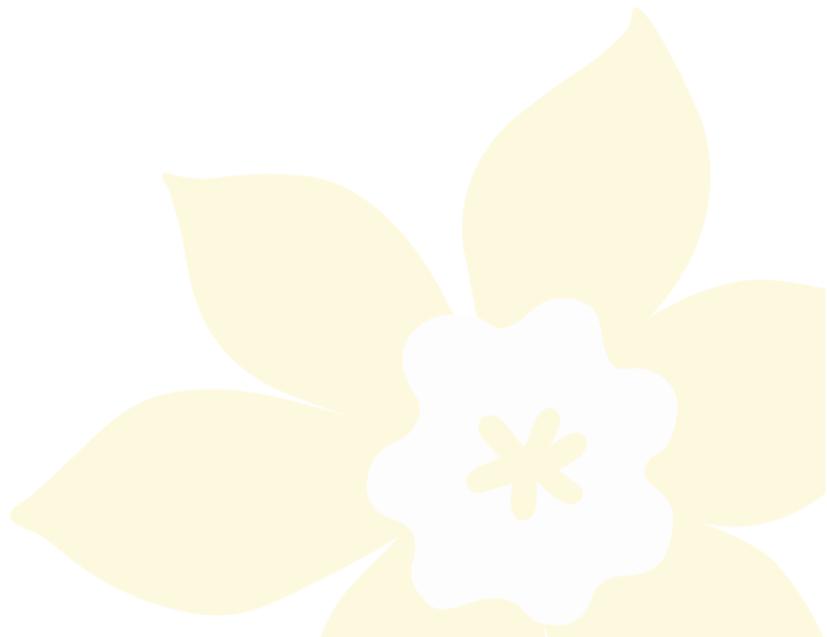
- Apply a broad spectrum (UVA and UVB protection) sunscreen with an SPF of 30 or higher to all the exposed areas of your skin 20 minutes before you go outside. If you forget to put it on before going outside, it's not too late! Put it on as soon as you can. You should also wear a lip balm containing SPF.
- Reapply your sunscreen and lip balm as directed, or even more often if you are perspiring heavily or if you are in the water.
- Know the signs of skin cancer and check your skin regularly. Most skin cancers can be cured if they're caught early enough. (See "[Reduce Your Risk of Skin Cancer](#)" for more information)

**Sources:**

Canadian Dermatology Association, [Outdoor Workers](#)

Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety, [Skin Cancer and Sunlight](#)

Canadian Cancer Society, [Reduce Your Risk of Skin Cancer](#)



## UV Radiation and the UV Index

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Ultraviolet (UV) radiation is invisible sun energy. It is shorter and more energetic than visible light, and, depending on its wavelength, can penetrate the ozone layer and trigger different biological effects. As the protective layer of ozone around the earth becomes thinner due to the effects of pollution and chemicals we are exposed to more UV rays.

UV is a natural part of the sun's rays and has always been with us, but we need to be careful about spending too much time in the sun.

### UV Rays

There are three types of UV rays:

- **Ultraviolet A (UVA)** rays make up most of the sun's natural light. They can penetrate deep into the skin, and cause wrinkles and premature aging.
- **Ultraviolet B (UVB)** rays are the main cause of sunburns. They are nearly 1,000 times stronger than UVA rays.
- **Ultraviolet C (short-wave radiation)** rays never reach the earth's surface because the atmosphere filters them out.

UV rays can get through clouds, fog, and haze. Water, sand, concrete, and especially snow can reflect, and even increase, the sun's burning rays. We are exposed to more UV rays as the protective layer of ozone around the earth becomes thinner due to the effects of pollution and chemicals.

### UV Index

The UV Index is a useful tool when it comes to sun protection. It tells you the strength of the sun's daily UV rays - the higher the number, the stronger the sun's rays and the more important it is to protect yourself.

You can find the UV index in your area by checking your local weather forecast. If the UV index reaches 3 or higher it's included in the forecast. You can also go to the UV index [online](#) for the daily forecast for your area. Before going outside, check the weather forecast for the daily UV Index. On days when the UV Index reaches 3 (moderate) or more, you need to be extra careful to protect your skin.

Try to reduce your time in the sun between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. – when the sun’s rays are at their strongest – or any time of the day when the UV Index is 3 or more.

In Canada between April and September, the UV Index can be 3 or more from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., even when it’s cloudy.

<b>UV Index</b>	<b>Sun Protection Actions</b>
<b>0-2</b> <b>Low</b>	Minimal sun protection required. If outside for more than one hour, wear sunglasses and sunscreen. Reflections can nearly double UV strength.
<b>3-5</b> <b>Moderate</b>	Take precautions. Cover up and wear a hat, sunglasses, and sunscreen if outside for 30 minutes or more. Look for shade near midday.
<b>6-7</b> <b>High</b>	Protection required. UV will damage skin and can cause sunburn. Reduce time in the sun between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. Seek shade, cover up, and wear a hat, sunglasses, and sunscreen.
<b>8-10</b> <b>Very High</b>	Protection is crucial. Find shade, get out the sunscreen, a hat, and sunglasses, and cover up. Unprotected skin can be damaged and burn quickly. Try to stay out of the sun between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m.
<b>11+</b> <b>Extreme</b>	This is very rare in Canada and requires maximum protection. Unprotected skin will be damaged and burn in minutes. Avoid the sun between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. Remain in the shade, cover up, and wear a hat, sunglasses, and sunscreen.

**Sources:**

Adapted from Health Canada, [The UV Index & Your Local Forecast](#)  
 Health Canada, [Sunlight and Ultraviolet Exposure](#)  
 Canadian Cancer Society, [Sun and UV](#)

