

Sun Safety Guide



How to Stay Sun-Safe During a Winnipeg Summer.

Whether at Work or At Play Make Sure You Do It the Sun-Safe Way

Ah! A Winnipeg summer. No more snow. No more cold. Time to head outdoors and enjoy lots of fun summer activities. While we encourage all Winnipeggers to get out and enjoy their summer pastimes, it is important to take protective measures against heat-related illness and sun exposure. Heat-related illness is a serious health threat and sun exposure can lead to skin cancer. This brochure provides you with information to ensure you stay sun-safe this summer.

The Facts About Ultraviolet (UV) Light and Skin Damage

Sunburns and suntans are two distinct skin reactions to sunlight. Both are evidence of skin injury, and are associated with skin cancer. Exposure to the sun also causes early and more pronounced skin wrinkling, another sign of skin damage.

A suntan is your skin's response to the injury caused by ultraviolet radiation from the sun. When this injury occurs, your skin produces a brown colouring called melanin to try to screen out UV rays. Although melanin provides some protection from further UV penetration, it also shows that skin damage has already occurred. Avoiding tanning is the best way to keep your skin healthy.

Everyone is at risk of developing skin cancer. Children and adults with fair skin are most at risk for skin injury from UV light. One in seven children born today will develop skin cancer during their lifetime. Children with fair skin who usually burn and never tan when out in the sun, and children with red or blonde hair, freckles and many moles are at greatest risk of developing skin cancer.

Skin cancer is the most common type of cancer. Two of every three skin cancers occur in the vulnerable head and neck regions. Although most skin cancers occur later in life, most sun exposure—about 80%—occurs by the age of 18. Preventing sunburns and tans is an essential step in reducing the chance of getting skin cancer and melanoma.

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Tips for Avoiding Sunburns and Suntans

Here are some simple precautions you can take to protect yourself from sunburns (and suntan):

- Avoid direct prolonged exposure to the sun, especially between 11 a.m. and 4 p.m. when the sun's intensity is greatest. Seek out shade whenever possible.
- From early spring to the start of fall, wear a wide-brimmed hat, loose-fitting shirts with long sleeves and long pants instead of shorts. Clothing made from closely woven material will shield the skin best.
- Use sunscreen with a "Sun Protective Factor" (SPF) of at least 15 with both UVA and UVB protection. Apply 15 to 30 minutes before you go outside to allow the active ingredients to soak into the skin. Sunscreen should be reapplied every two hours or more often if swimming or exercising.
- The lower lip is a common spot for skin cancer to occur, so protect your lips by applying an SPF broad-spectrum lip balm.
- Do not apply sunscreen to children less than 6 months old. Babies should be kept in a shady area, out of direct and reflected sunlight.
- Be careful of medication. Certain prescriptions, such as tetracycline, can make your skin more sensitive to UV rays. Consult your doctor or pharmacist if you have any questions about your medications.
- Protect your eyes as well as your skin from ultraviolet damage. Wear sunglasses that filter out UV rays. Some sunglasses have labels stating the degree of UV protection they provide.
- Watch for reflected light as the sun's harmful ultraviolet rays can bounce back at you from sand, snow, concrete and water.
- Remember that children can get sunburned on cloudy days as 80% of the sun's rays penetrate through light clouds, mist and fog.
- Avoid the use of sunlamps.
- Check your skin regularly and see your doctor if you experience: moles that grow quickly, change shape or colour, bleed, or repeatedly itch; sore, oozing or scaly patches on the skin; a persistent white patch on the lips; or any unusual skin condition that doesn't heal in four weeks.

The Facts about Heat-Related Illness

Too much exposure to the sun can cause heat-related illnesses, ranging from mild dehydration to severe heat stroke. Very young children and older adults are most at risk. It is important to recognize the following symptoms of heat-related illness.

Mild Dehydration:

- Loss of energy
- Little urine production or very dark urine

Heat Exhaustion:

- Moist, cool, clammy skin, which may be pale or red in colour
- Headache
- Nausea or vomiting
- Dizziness
- Fatigue

Heat Cramps

(usually occur after significant exertion):

- Muscular pain or spasms usually in legs or abdominal muscles

Heat Stroke (can be life threatening):

- Dry, red, hot skin
- Drowsy, confused, decreased level of consciousness
- Nausea, vomiting
- Increase in body temperature
- Shallow breathing
- Rapid pulse

If you are experiencing heat stroke symptoms, **seek medical attention immediately**. For less serious symptoms, cool down by resting in a cool place, by using wet cloths or clothing, or by taking a cool bath. Replace fluids by drinking 1/2 glass of water every 15 minutes.



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Tips for Staying Cool and Preventing Heat-Related Illness

The following tips will help you to keep safe and cool during the hot days of summer:

- Drink 8–10 glasses of water per day, whether you feel thirsty or not.
- Drink even more water (2–4 glasses per hour) during periods of physical activity or exertion. If sweating heavily, sport drinks may be an effective alternative to water.
- Avoid drinks with caffeine or alcohol, as they tend to cause dehydration.
- Where possible, plan activities during cooler times of the day. Avoid being outdoors or taking part in strenuous activities during the hottest period of the day, which normally occurs between 11 a.m. and 4 p.m. If you can't avoid the hottest parts of the day, take more breaks than usual.
- Wear a hat, preferably broad-brimmed.
- Wear light coloured, lightweight, loose fitting clothing.
- Use sunscreen with SPF of 15 or more to avoid sunburn. Sunburn interferes with the body's cooling process.
- If your home isn't air conditioned, cool down by using fans, spending time in the coolest room of your home, or taking a cool (not cold) shower, bath or sponge bath. Try to spend some time each day in a cool place, such as an air-conditioned public building (e.g. Public Library) or the home of a friend.
- Avoid using the oven or other heat-producing appliances during the hottest part of the day.
- Eat smaller meals more frequently.

For more information on Sun Safety, visit the following web sites:

Canadian Cancer Society at www.cancer.ca

Health Canada at www.hc-sc.gc.ca

Canadian Dermatology Association at www.dermatology.ca

