

There is good news: skin cancer can be prevented. The challenge, however, lies in changing the attitudes and behaviors that increase a person's risk of developing skin cancer.

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### Who is at risk?

Although anyone can get skin cancer, individuals with certain risk factors are particularly at risk. Some risk factors for skin cancer are

- Constant exposure to the sun through work and play
- Personal history of skin cancer
- Family history of skin cancer
- A history of sunburns early in life
- Skin that burns, freckles, gets red easily, or becomes painful in the sun
- Certain types and a large number of moles
- Freckles which indicate sun sensitivity and sun damage
- Lighter natural skin color, hair colour, or eye colour

Exposure to the sun's ultraviolet (UV) rays appears to be the most important *environmental* factor in developing skin cancer. This makes skin cancer a largely preventable disease when sun protective practices and behaviors are consistently applied and utilized. UV radiation is also a factor in the development of lip cancer, making sun protection even more important. UV rays from artificial sources of light, such as tanning beds and sun lamps are just as dangerous as those from the sun, and should also be avoided.

UV Index™ ranges from 0 to 11. Zero means that minimal sun protection is required and 11 means take full precautions. Before you go outside remember to check the Index.

The UV Index	Description	Sun Protection Action
1-2	Low	Minimal sun protection required for normal activity. Wear sunglasses on bright days. If outside for more than one hour, cover up and use sunscreen. Reflections from snow can nearly double UV strength. Wear sunglasses and apply sunscreen.
3-5	Moderate	Take precautions – cover up, wear a hat, sunglasses and sunscreen – especially if you will be outside for 30 minutes or more. Look for shade near midday when the sun is strongest.
6-7	High	Protection required – UV damages the skin and can cause sunburn. Reduce time in the sun between 11 a.m. and 4 p.m. and take full precautions – seek shade, cover up, wear a hat, sunglasses and sunscreen.
8-10	Very High	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.
11+	Extreme	Values of 11 or more are 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.

### Protect yourself from UV rays

- Apply sunscreens that block both ultraviolet A (UV-A) and ultraviolet B (UV-B) light
- Use sunscreens with a sun-protection factor (SPF) of 15 or higher; remember to include your lips.

This information is intended for general information only and should not replace consultation with healthcare professionals.

