

World Melanoma Day 2019

As melanoma rates continue to rise in Canada, new survey shows some worrisome trends in sun-safe behaviours among Canadians

Ottawa, May 13, 2019 – On World Melanoma Day 2019, the Canadian Dermatology Association (CDA) urges Canadians to adopt sun-safe practices that will better protect them against melanoma and other forms of skin cancer.

This call to action from Canada’s certified dermatologists comes as the CDA releases new public opinion research that reveals some worrisome trends in Canadians’ attitudes towards sun exposure and sun protection. The latest CDA Sun Safe Behaviour Survey shows that Canadians continue to have misconceptions about certain “sun smart” practices. The survey also suggests that Canadians are still too frequently failing to take the steps they know would reduce their risk of skin cancer, including melanoma.

“This gap between knowledge and behaviour on some sun-protection measures is a matter of concern for dermatologists,” says Dr. Jennifer Beecker, National Chair of the CDA Sun Awareness Working Group. “As we gear up for the summer months, when Canadians spend more time outdoors and increase their exposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun, our profession wants to raise awareness about sun safety and also dispel some common misconceptions.”

Melanoma: An increasing threat

World Melanoma Day is marked annually around the globe on the second Monday in May and May is recognized as Melanoma Awareness Month. Canada’s certified dermatologists note that the incidence of melanoma has steadily increased in Canada for the past several decades. From 1992 to 2013, the incidence rates of melanoma went up 2.1% per year for men, and 2.0% for women.

According to the Canadian Cancer Society, in 2017, an estimated 7,200 Canadians were diagnosed with melanoma skin cancer and 1,250 Canadians died from the disease.

“As the incidence of melanoma continues to rise, the CDA wants to reinforce the message that sun-safe behaviours are very important for prevention,” says CDA President Dr. Neil Shear. “We are also stressing the need to seek your dermatologist’s advice as soon as you notice worrisome skin changes. While melanoma is the deadliest form of skin cancer, it is highly treatable when discovered early.”

CDA Sun Safe Behaviour Survey

The CDA has commissioned its Sun Safe Behaviour Survey every year since 2015. The questions for the most recent survey were fielded on Ipsos’ Canadian online omnibus between September 5 and 11, 2018, to a representative sample of 1,204 Canadians, age 16 and older.

Positive Findings

- Sunburn, skin cancer, and premature skin aging rank as the top three sun-exposure concerns among Canadians and they are most concerned about the risk of skin cancer.

- The percentage of Canadians who say it is important to stay out of the sun between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. has increased significantly since 2017.
- Three-quarters of Canadians say it is important to use sunscreen, and close to 90% report using sunscreen with SPF 30 or higher. Seven in ten agree it is important to wear sun-protective clothing.
- Nearly 6 in 10 Canadians say that they conduct self-examinations of their skin, with a third saying that they ask their doctor/dermatologist to conduct skin examinations.

Findings of concern

- Two out of 10 Canadians use sunscreen daily.
- There has been a significant increase in the false belief that some sun exposure without sunscreen is needed to meet the recommended vitamin D requirement.
- Although 9 out of 10 respondents agreed that too much exposure to sunlight can damage their eyes, the proportion of Canadians who say they wear sunglasses with UV protective lenses when outdoors, all year round, is down significantly from 2017.
- The percentage of respondents who believe that getting a sunburn is the first step to getting a tan has increased significantly from 2017. The CDA stresses that sunburn can increase the risk of melanoma and should be avoided.

For more details see FACT SHEET: 2018 SUN SAFE BEHAVIOUR SURVEY

For complete findings visit www.dermatology.ca/statistics

Minimize Your Melanoma Risk

These are among the sun-safe behaviours the CDA reminds Canadians to practice:

- Seek shade between 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
- Wear protective clothing, a wide brimmed hat, and UV-protective sunglasses.
- Wear sunscreen with a minimum sun protection factor (SPF) of 30.
- Early detection is key, and everyone should regularly perform a skin evaluation and see a certified dermatologist if you spot something suspicious.

For more advice from the CDA on protecting yourself from melanoma, other skin cancers, and World Melanoma Day, visit dermatology.ca/world-melanoma-day

ABOUT THE CDA

The Canadian Dermatology Association, founded in 1925, represents Canadian dermatologists. The association provides easy access to the largest, most reliable source of medical knowledge on dermatology. CDA exists to advance the science and art of medicine and surgery related to the care of the skin, hair and nails; provide continuing professional development for its members; support and advance patient care; provide public education on sun protection and other aspects of skin health; and promote a lifetime of healthier skin, hair and nails. By doing so, CDA informs and empowers both medical professionals and the Canadian public.

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