

SKIN CANCER

Facts

- Skin cancer is the most common cancer in Canada. In Saskatchewan in 2008, there were 138 cases of melanoma and 2,964 cases of non-melanoma skin cancers. There were 24 deaths in Saskatchewan due to melanoma in 2008.
- Melanoma is a less common form of skin cancer, but it is the most dangerous type because it can be difficult to control if it spreads to other parts of the body.
- The most common risk factor for skin cancer is exposure to ultraviolet radiation (UVR), whether from the sun or from tanning devices.
- Everyone needs to protect his/her skin from too much exposure to ultraviolet radiation. People with naturally dark skin may be less sensitive to the sun; however, even people with brown or black skin can get skin cancer.
- In 2004, the total estimated economic burden of skin cancer in Canada was \$532 million. By 2031, it is estimated to rise to \$922 million annually.

Who is most at Risk?

- People with fair-skin, blond or red hair, lighter eye colour (blue, green, grey), and freckles; people who tan poorly and burn easily.
- People who have had sunburns, particularly during childhood and adolescence.
- People with a large number of moles or with one or more unusual moles.
- People who spend a lot of time outdoors such as outdoor workers.
- People with a past history of skin cancer.
- People with a family history of skin cancer.
- People who take medication that makes them more sensitive to the sun.



Tanning

- Exposure to ultraviolet radiation (UVR), whether from the sun or from tanning devices, increases your risk of melanoma and other skin cancers.
- The risk of melanoma is increased by 75 per cent when the use of tanning devices starts before age 35.
- Avoid tanning beds; especially youth under the age of 18.
- Both a sunburn and a tan are unhealthy; both are signs of skin damage.
- There is no 'safe tan'; a 'base tan' does not offer the protection needed from the sun.



Vitamin D

- The sun is a main source of vitamin D, which is essential in growing strong and healthy bones.
- The amount of sun needed to make enough vitamin D changes from person to person - it depends on your age, diet, skin colour, the amount of skin exposed, where you live, and the time of day and time of year. Prolonged sun exposure or a tan is not needed to get enough vitamin D. One can get some vitamin D synthesis through casual sun exposure in Canada from April through to October; however, it is important to practice sun safety.
- Talk to your health practitioner about required levels of vitamin D, dietary sources, and taking a supplement.

