

Sun safety on winter vacation

In 2006, the Second National Sun Survey asked 1,375 Ontarians (aged 16 and over) about time spent in the sun and use of sun protection. Twenty-one per cent reported taking a winter vacation to a sunny place the previous winter.

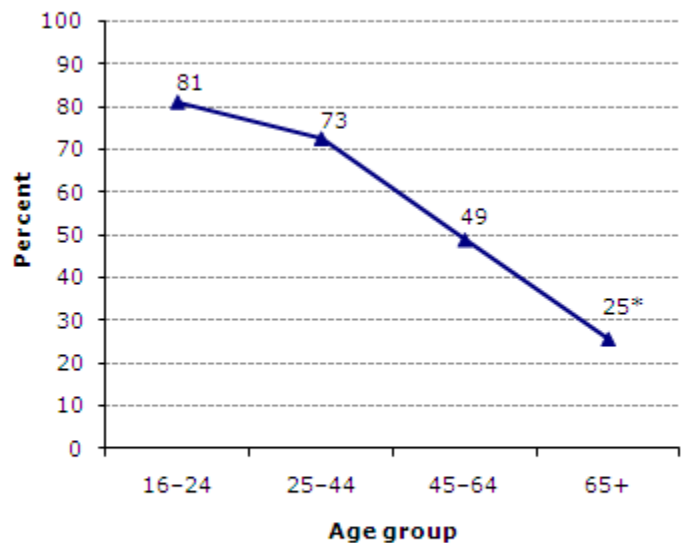
While on their winter vacation, over half of respondents (54%) spent 3 or more hours a day in the sun between 11 a.m. and 4 p.m.: 81% of those aged 16–24, with lower percentages at progressively older ages. Nearly 1 in 5 (18%) winter vacationers got a sunburn while on their vacation.

Ultraviolet radiation (UVR), from either the sun or tanning equipment, is the main cause of skin cancer. It also causes sunburn, cataracts and premature aging of the skin. UVR from the sun is stronger nearer the equator, so midday exposure on winter vacations in such locations is particularly intense. This type of intense exposure is particularly harmful in terms of increasing the risk of melanoma, the most fatal form of skin cancer.

Those taking sunny winter vacations can protect themselves by following these recommendations:

- Plan outdoor activities before 11 a.m. or after 4 p.m. to minimize exposure when UVR is most intense
- Seek shade or create your own shade with an umbrella or other portable structure
- Wear a wide-brimmed hat and loose-fitting clothing made of tightly woven fabric
- Liberally apply a broad-spectrum (with UVA and UVB protection) sunscreen with a Sun Protection Factor (SPF) of 30 or higher to exposed skin and lips
- Wear sunglasses that have/offer UVA & UVB protection

Ontarians spending 3 or more hours in the sun per day while on winter vacation in a sunny climate, 2006



Source: Insight on Cancer: Sun Exposure and Protective Behaviours in Ontario. An Ontario report based on the 2006 Second National Sun Survey.

*Interpret with caution: $N \geq 10$ but coefficient of variation 16.6% – 33.3%.

- Youth and younger adults spend a lot of time in the sun while on winter vacation.
- Since the sun's rays are particularly strong near the equator, vacationers need to adopt full sun protection measures.

For more information on sun safety and sun safety measures, see:

- Insight on Cancer: Sun Exposure and Protective Behaviours in Ontario. An Ontario report based on the 2006 Second National Sun Survey available at <http://www.cancercare.on.ca/common/pages/UserFile.aspx?fileId=87528>
- Understanding the UV Index can help you reduce your risk of skin cancer (June 2004 Ontario Cancer Fact) available at <http://www.cancercare.on.ca/cms/one.aspx?pageId=9735>

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