

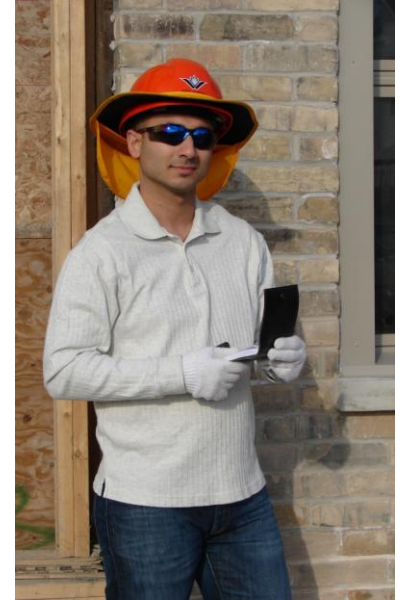
Sun Protection and Outdoor Workers

Background Information/Rationale for Focus

The majority of outdoor workers (62 per cent) spend more than two hours per day, on average, working in the sun.¹ The risks associated with excessive ultraviolet radiation (UVR) from the sun include skin cancer, eye damage, weakening of the immune system and premature aging of the skin.²

Skin cancer, the most common form of all cancers in Canada, is easily preventable. Despite this, fewer than half of outdoor workers in Ontario report engaging in most of the recommended sun avoidance and protective behaviours.³ Young males are heavily represented among outdoor workers and may present special challenges when promoting sun safety in the workplace.

Few outdoor workers identify their employers as sources of information about sun safety.⁴ Worksite interventions, including safety policies and exposure guidelines should be developed and incorporated into existing occupational health and safety programs. The Ontario Ministry of Labour provides guidelines in the document “Ultraviolet Radiation in the Workplace.”



In Waterloo Region, 40.1 per cent of adults surveyed in 2004 reported experiencing a sunburn within the previous year. When asked about four types of sun protective behaviours (reduced exposure during high UV and use of protective clothing, sunglasses or sunscreen) 28.6 per cent of the population said that they sometimes or often engaged in at least three of these practices.⁵

Goals For The Workplace To Strive For

1. To promote awareness of the health risks associated with excessive UVR exposure.
2. To provide education about sun avoidance and protective practices to reduce health risks.
3. To create a supportive environment that enables employees to practice sun protective behaviours.

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Getting Started – Utilizing a Variety of Health Promotion Strategies

Awareness Raising

- Utilize bulletin boards and displays featuring sun safety in high traffic areas, at wellness events, or during health and safety training sessions
- Dedicate an accessible area to display pamphlets and resources
- Include short articles in an internal newsletter, staff emails or pay cheque inserts (check websites and local newspaper for relevant articles)
- Post Ministry of Labour workplace guidelines (i.e. “Ultraviolet Radiation in the Workplace”)

Skill Building

- Provide continuing education for management and employees about implementing and enforcing sun protection guidelines, including risks, workplace policies and worker responsibility
- Provide orientation to new workers and seasonal employees regarding sun protection policies/ guidelines
- Distribute risk assessment surveys to outdoor workers to determine: level of exposure, use of avoidance and protective behaviours, and need for education and support

Workplace Example:

Burn the Midnight Oil

During hot summers, reschedule outdoor or otherwise hot work to occur at night or at times when the sun’s rays are not as strong.

Creating Supportive Environments

- Organize work routines around the peak UV period (11:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.) to limit employee exposure
- Rotate workers and their shifts to reduce each worker’s total UV exposure;
- Move jobs indoors, into shaded areas or create shade (i.e. tents, umbrellas, and canopies) in order to limit exposure
- Provide personal protective equipment such as hats, clothing, sunglasses, sunscreen, etc.

Creating Healthy Workplace Policy

- Develop and implement a written sun protection policy. Considerations may be for both outdoors workers and work-related outdoor employee events
- Outline training and education requirements



Telephone consultation is available through **Project Health: 519-883-2287**

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Region of Waterloo Public Health Resources

Project Health has a number of resources available for planning, implementing and evaluating your workplace wellness activities. As well, we have a number of links to external resources that you may find helpful. Please see www.projecthealth.ca for further resources on this topics area.

Also, the Public Health Resource Centre has a number of displays, educational kits, DVDs, posters, books, and pamphlets relevant to workplace health. Search for resources using the online catalogue. Or simply contact Resource Centre staff with your topic and they will suggest resources for you. Note that resources may be booked in advance.

For more information, click [here](#) (link to: <http://chd.region.waterloo.on.ca/web/health.nsf/DocID/1FB38293EBA4935785256B120060265E?OpenDocument>)

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References

- ¹ Ontario Sun Safety Working Group. (1998). *Sun Exposure and Protective Behaviours: Ontario Report 1998*. Toronto: Author.
- ² Canadian Cancer Society (Ontario Division). (1998).
- ³ Toronto Public Health. (1999). *Sun Safety When Employees Work Outdoors: A Health and Safety Manual*. Toronto: Author.
- ⁴ Toronto Public Health. (1999). *Sun Safety When Employees Work Outdoors: A Health and Safety Manual*. Toronto: Author.
- ⁵ Region of Waterloo Public Health. (2005). *A Glance at Cancer in Waterloo Region*. Retrieved from <http://chd.region.waterloo.on.ca/en/researchResourcesPublications/resources/GlanceAtCancer.pdf>



Project Health
Supporting Healthy Workplaces