



News Release

Pharmacists Offer Residents Sun Safety Tips

June 15, 2020 (St. John's, NL) With the province now at Level 3 and many outdoor activities resuming, the Pharmacists' Association of Newfoundland and Labrador (PANL) is reminding residents about the importance of sun safety and offering tips for selecting the right sunscreen and applying the product correctly.

The sun protection factor (SPF) number on sunscreens refers to the amount of time it takes for your skin to burn without any protection and how long it would take if the appropriate amount of sunscreen is applied. An SPF 30 product will protect your skin 30 times longer from burning as compared to no product. This number is the optimal exposure and is dependent on how much to apply, how long the product has been applied, and other factors such as amount of sweating or exposure to water. Sunscreens with higher SPF ratings tend to block slightly more UVB rays. For example, SPF 15 blocks 93% UVB rays and SPF 30 and higher block 97% UVB rays. There are no products that offer 100% protection.

“Most people know they should wear sunscreen,” notes community pharmacist Keith Bailey, “but many become overwhelmed when trying to select the right product.”

Following are a few tips on selecting a product and applying it correctly:

- Start by looking for one with the Canadian Dermatology Association (CDA) approval.
- Look for a broad-spectrum product - one that protects for UVA and UVB rays.
- Look for a product with 30 SPF or higher.
- For activities in the water or that cause sweating, use a water-resistant product.
- The product should be non-comedogenic, non-irritating and hypo-allergenic. Avoid products with PABA if allergic or have sensitivities.
- Check the expiry date - sunscreens do expire.
- Apply generous amounts to exposed skin. The average adult needs two to three tablespoonfuls to cover their entire body and a teaspoonful to cover the face. Don't forget the ears, neck, nose, bald spots, backs of hands and tops of feet. Use lip balm to protect the lips and reapply at least every hour.
- Put sunscreen on first and then apply makeup or insect repellent.
- Do not spray aerosol or pump products directly on to the face - spray on hands and apply. Be careful applying around the eyes and mouth.
- Apply 15 minutes before sun exposure.
- Reapply after about 40 minutes of swimming or sweating.
- Reapply after prolonged periods outside

Sunscreens should not be used as the sole protection against the sun.

- Use other forms such as shade, hats, clothing, and sunglasses as forms of protection from the harmful rays of the sun.
- When possible, avoid sun exposure between 10:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. when the UV rays are the strongest.

Parents are also reminded to take extra precautions to protect infants against the harmful effects of the sun.

“Extreme heat from the sun can be dangerous for all children, especially infants and toddlers,” added Mr. Bailey. “Babies are not born with a developed skin protection system, so they burn more easily. Their skin is more sensitive because the outer layer is thinner. In general, sunscreen is not recommended for infants less than six months of age, so parents need to be especially vigilant in protecting their infants from the sun by taking steps such as keeping them out of direct sunlight, dressing them in UV protective clothing - including sunglasses and a wide brimmed hat, and never letting them play or sleep in the sun.”

PANL is also reminding residents to speak to a local pharmacist about photosensitizing medications that can cause an individual to be more sensitive to the sun and more likely to burn.

PANL is the voice of pharmacists and advocates for pharmacists as health care team members integral to the effective and efficient delivery of health services in Newfoundland and Labrador.

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