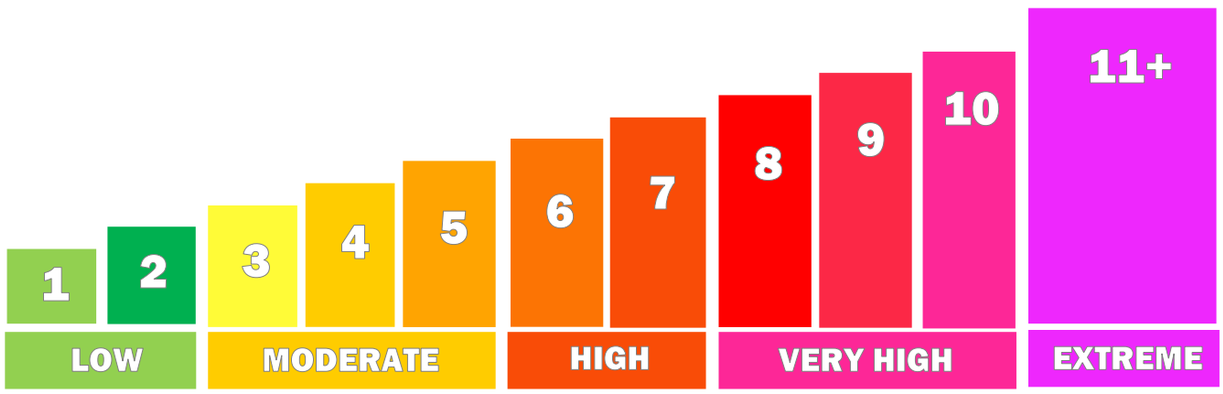
Sun Safety

Warmer weather often brings both higher levels of ultraviolet (UV) radiation and increased temperatures. Extended exposure to UV radiation can affect the skin and eyes over time, while warm conditions may contribute to heat-related illness particularly for those working outdoors. Sun exposure and heat-related illness often occur together, making awareness of their signs and symptoms essential when conducting outdoor work or activities.

Sun exposure is typically measured using the UV Index, which ranges from 0 to 11+ and indicates the strength of UV radiation from the sun. Higher values reflect a greater potential for sun-related effects and an increased need for protective measures. Checking the UV Index and weather conditions regularly can help indicate when sun exposure levels are higher and inform the use of appropriate protective measures to reduce sun-related effects. When the UV Index is 3 or higher, protective measures are recommended especially during midday hours when levels are typically strongest.



Sun Exposure Awareness

UV exposure is influenced by the strength of ultraviolet (UV) radiation, as well as factors such as the type of work, the surrounding environment, and the amount of time spent outdoors. Tasks performed in open areas, around reflective surfaces (such as water, light-colored materials, or pavement), or during peak daylight hours may result in increased exposure.

UV radiation can still be present on cloudy or cooler days, and exposure may vary throughout the day depending on work location and tasks.

Protect Yourself

When working or participating in activities outdoors, if the UV index is 3 or higher, the following measures are recommended to help reduce sun exposure.

- **Wear light protective clothing** that covers exposed skin, along with a hat and UV-protective eyewear.
- **Use sunscreen** with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 30 or higher. Reapply as needed when participating in outdoor work or activities.
- **Stay hydrated** by drinking fluids frequently throughout the day. Drink roughly 1 cup (8oz) of water every 15-20 minutes when working in warm conditions.
- **Limit sun exposure** by using shade when available, including natural or built cover, and take breaks in shaded or covered areas where possible.

Planning for Conditions

Conditions such as temperature, humidity, and physical workload can influence how the body responds during outdoor work. These factors can increase physical strain, particularly during sustained or more demanding tasks.

As conditions become warmer:

- **Work pace** or task intensity should be adjusted to help manage physical strain.
- **Breaks** taken more frequently in appropriate rest areas.
- **Shift tasks** to lower-exertion or more suitable work activities when possible.
- **Work schedules** or task timing should be adjusted where operationally feasible.

Individuals who are new to warmer conditions, or returning after time away, may benefit from gradually increasing their exposure over time to allow the body to adapt.

Heat Awareness

Sun exposure often occurs alongside warm conditions. Early signs of heat-related effects may include headaches, dizziness, fatigue, or nausea. Moving to a cooler area, drinking fluids and resting can help manage these symptoms. More serious signs, such as confusion, loss of consciousness, or vomiting require immediate medical attention.

Monitoring how you feel and checking in on others can help ensure early signs are recognized and addressed. For more information regarding heat stress visit https://psc.gpei.ca/safety-talk-resources

Adapted from: CCOHS, WCB PEI, CSCF and Government of Canada

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Sun Safety *in Canada*

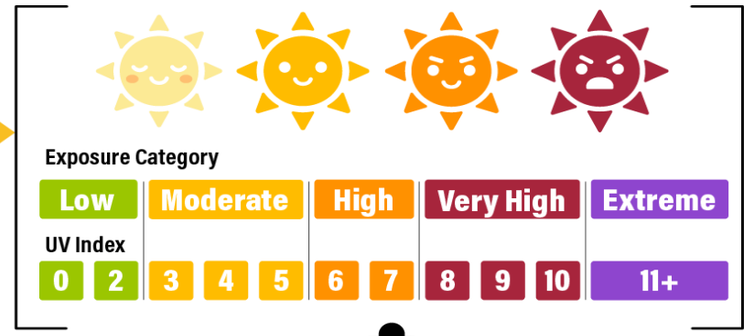
Did you know? 1.7 million

outdoor workers in Canada are substantially exposed to the sun on the job.*

The largest industrial groups exposed are:*

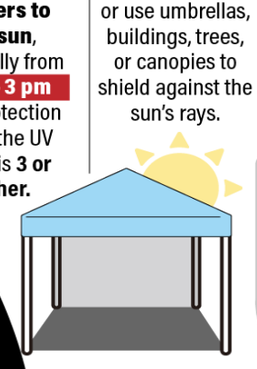
- construction
- farming
- building care and maintenance

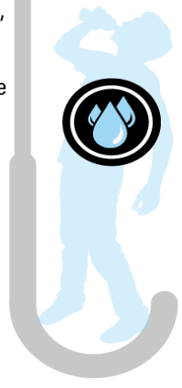
Exposure to ultraviolet radiation (UV) can cause sunburn, premature skin aging, eye damage and skin cancer. Tans and sunburns are signs that UV rays have damaged the skin. This damage can occur quickly and stay with you for life.



The UV index measures the strength of the sun's rays. The higher the number, the greater the need to take precautions. Employers should:

- **Avoid unnecessary exposure of workers to the sun**, especially from **11 am - 3 pm** Use protection when the UV index is **3 or higher.**
- **Use shaded areas**, set up shade structures, or use umbrellas, buildings, trees, or canopies to shield against the sun's rays.
- **Provide access to water.**
- **Encourage breaks in areas where workers can cool down.**





Reduce the risk

Use sunscreen on exposed skin. Apply waterproof sunscreen with a Sun Protection Factor (SPF) of at least 30 that has both UVA and UVB protection to all exposed areas. Re-apply every two hours and after sweating.

Protect your skin on cloudy days and in the winter too, especially in snow or at high altitudes.

Cover and protect your skin with a broad brimmed hat, a lightweight long-sleeved shirt, and long pants. Wear UV-blocking sunglasses to protect your eyes.

Examine the skin regularly for suspicious spots. Check your skin for irregularities such as moles. See a doctor if you have unusual skin conditions that don't heal in four weeks, sore ulcers or a scaly patch on the skin, a white patch on the lips that doesn't heal, or moles that grow quickly, change shape or colour, or bleed repeatedly.

If you employ outdoor workers, sun safety should be part of your health and safety program *

- Develop a sun safety policy
- Involve workers in the design and implementation of the program
- Review current processes for managing sun exposure, and assess the risks
- Implement control measures
- Monitor, review, and take corrective action as necessary

* Resources on developing a sun safety program: sunsafetyatwork.ca

*CAREX Canada, https://www.carexcanada.ca/

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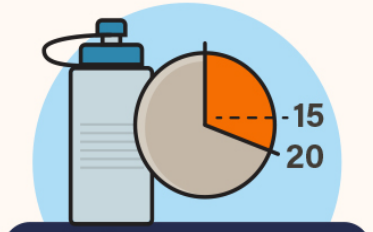
Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety

Keep your cool

When working outdoors, take steps to protect workers from heat-related illness and the sun's harmful ultraviolet (UV) radiation.

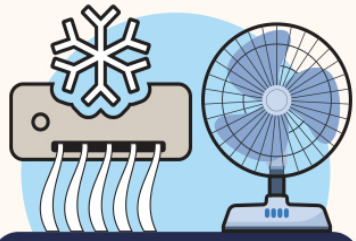


Drink up

Thirsty or not, workers should drink plenty of water – a cup every 15 to 20 minutes. Avoid caffeine or alcohol which can be dehydrating.

Time it right

Avoid scheduling strenuous tasks between 11 a.m. and 4 p.m. when the sun's rays are strongest.



Cool off

Encourage workers to take breaks in the shade or in air-conditioned buildings or vehicles, and to not overexert themselves.

Shield from sun

Set up shade structures or use umbrellas, buildings or trees to shield workers from the sun's rays. Workers can get sunburn even on a cloudy day.

Take time to adjust

Gradually increase workloads and heat exposure among workers.

Cover up and protect

Ensure workers wear light, loose-fitting clothing, UV-rated sunglasses, a wide-brim hat, and sunscreen with a Sun Protection Factor (SPF) of at least 30 and UVA / UVB protection. Sunscreen should be re-applied every two hours and after sweating.

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