

SUN and SNOW



SUN PROTECTION DURING THE WINTER

Prolonged exposure to ultraviolet (UV) rays of the sun is a leading cause of skin cancer, and during the summer months our skin is exposed to intense UV radiation. However, in the winter months the rays of the sun also pose a danger to your skin. Skiers, snowboarders and tobogganners can be exposed to extra UV rays reflected from the snow, and the elevation of the mountains. This makes it important to remember sun protection when you are outside enjoying winter sports.

In the Snow...

Even in the cooler seasons, your skin and eyes receive UV radiation:

- ❖ Sports at higher altitudes intensify exposure to UV radiation as there is less atmosphere to block the sun's rays
- ❖ Strong winds at higher altitudes dehydrate the outer layer of the skin, increasing the sun's harmful effects
- ❖ Up to 80 per cent of the sun's harmful rays can be reflected by snow, and other bright surfaces such as water and ice, causing sunburn and damage to uncovered skin
- ❖ A condition called "snow blindness" can occur if your eyes are unprotected. This temporary condition can result in your eyes feeling a sense of grittiness and watering

Preventing Skin Damage...

Protect yourself from skin and eye damage when out in the snow:

- ❖ Cover up! When outside wear protective clothing and a hat
- ❖ Wear sunglasses with UVA and UVB protection. Close fitting, wrap around styles can offer greater protection from reflected UV rays
- ❖ Use a sunscreen and lip balm with SPF 30 or higher. Do not forget to apply 15 to 30 minutes before going outdoors, and reapply every two hours
- ❖ Become familiar with the UV index given in newspapers and weather forecasts. It predicts the strength of the sun rays; the higher the number, the stronger the UV rays and the greater the health risk

Fresh snow and sunshine are a great combination for enjoying outdoor activities. Take charge of your health — be Sunsmart and practice sun safety all year long!

For more information contact York Region
Health Services *Health Connection* at
1-800-361-5653 (TTY 1-866-252-9933)

Check out ▶ www.york.ca
▶ www.cancer.ca/ontario.aspx
▶ www.dermatology.ca

