

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **New CDA Data Reveals Disconnect Between Knowing the Risks of Tanning and Behaviour Among Gen Z**

#### ***Nearly 4 in 10 Gen Z Canadians Still Tan Despite Knowing the Risks***

OTTAWA, ON – Tuesday May 5, 2026 – The Canadian Dermatology Association (CDA) launches its annual Sun Awareness Month campaign with a renewed focus on the growing trend of tanning behaviours, misinformation, and rising skin cancer risk among younger Canadians.

For over 30 years, the CDA has led national efforts each May to promote sun safety. This year’s campaign evolves to meet Gen Z where they are, addressing tanning culture, the influence of social media, and the disconnect between skincare habits and sun protection.

New national survey data, conducted by Ipsos on behalf of the CDA, explores Gen Z attitudes toward tanning, sun protection, and UV risk. Key findings include:

- Tanning remains widespread among Gen Z: 39% report intentionally tanning in the past year, with most doing so outdoors (72%).
- Peer influence is strong: 68% of Gen Z say intentional tanning is common among their peers, rising to 87% among those who tan themselves.
- Appearance drives behaviour: Among tanners, 45% say it makes them feel more confident, and 37% say they look better in photos.
- Awareness does not equal behaviour change: While 79% are concerned about skin cancer and 63% know tanning is a risk, 39% still report intentionally tanning.
- Skincare habits do not translate to sun protection: While 81% of Gen Z follow a skincare routine, only 22% use sunscreen year-round.

**“Despite a high awareness of the risks, many young Canadians are still intentionally tanning,” said Dr. Julia Carroll, Vice Chair of the CDA Sun Awareness Working Group. “Nearly 4 in 10 Gen Z report tanning, even though most know it increases their risk of skin cancer. What we’re seeing is a clear disconnect; appearance and confidence are often outweighing health concerns, which is deeply concerning from a prevention standpoint.”**

Despite widespread awareness of the risks, tanning continues to appeal to many young Canadians, often driven by appearance-related motivations and reinforced through social media. To challenge these perceptions, the campaign features a series of Gen Z reaction videos where participants viewed exaggerated scenarios of people deliberately “burning” their skin (e.g., putting their hands in a toaster or laying their face on a hot waffle iron). The contrast is intentional: highlighting the harm and prompting a key question; if we recognize these behaviours as unsafe, why do we accept intentional UV exposure through tanning beds or prolonged sun exposure? Participants then shared their immediate reactions and attitudes toward tanning, offering insight into whether the content shifts their thinking.

The campaign also includes a real-life story that brings the risks into sharper focus, featuring a young Canadian diagnosed with melanoma at just 19 years old serving as a reminder that skin cancer can affect anyone, regardless of age.

**“Intentional tanning is becoming normalized among young Canadians, with more than two-thirds of Gen Z saying it’s common among their peers,” said Dr. Sunil Kalia, Chair of the CDA Sun Awareness Working Group and Associate Professor at the Department of Dermatology and Skin Science, University of British Columbia. “That kind of social influence can make risky behaviours feel harmless, but the reality is that UV exposure significantly increases the risk of skin cancer. We need to shift the perception so that protecting your skin becomes the norm, not the exception.”**

Throughout the month, CDA dermatologists will engage directly with Gen Z on social media, answering common and often misunderstood questions about tanning and sun safety, including the use of active skincare products with self-tanners, the safety of frequent self-tanner use, how much sun exposure is too much, and the risks associated with even a single sunburn. These expert-led conversations aim to cut through misinformation and provide clear, science-based guidance in an accessible way.

The campaign reinforces that protecting your skin goes beyond sunscreen alone. Canadians are encouraged to adopt a range of sun-safe behaviours, including seeking shade, wearing protective clothing, and using broad-spectrum sunscreen as part of a daily skincare routine.

Sun Awareness Month serves as a reminder that skin cancer is one of the most preventable forms of cancer and that early habits can have lifelong impacts.

– 30 –

**About the Canadian Dermatology Association:**

Established in 1925, the Canadian Dermatology Association (CDA) is a member organization that advocates for Dermatologists across Canada, underscoring their essential role in the health care system. As a community of Certified Dermatologists, we are dedicated to advancing the science of dermatology, encompassing over 3000 skin, hair, and nail conditions. Our commitment extends beyond professional support; we also protect and educate the public through comprehensive educational initiatives and our product recognition program.

To learn more about CDA initiatives, visit [dermatology.ca](http://dermatology.ca) and join the conversation on our social media channels.

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