

Sun survey 2009

A survey of the sun habits of the Danish population during the summer of 2009.

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Summary

This report provides an overview of the sun habits of the Danish population in the summer 2009. It is based on a representative survey carried out in September 2009 among 4,186 respondents aged 15-64.

Respondents were asked about their behaviour in the sun in Denmark and on holiday abroad. The objective was to gain knowledge and insights to be able to take the appropriate measures and initiatives to prevent skin cancer. The survey also looked at awareness of the Danish sun safety campaign messages. Similar surveys were carried out in previous years enabling comparison.

Behaviour in the sun

During the summer 2009 the majority of the population aged between 15 and 64 spent a large amount of time outside both during the week and in their free time. This makes communicating sun protection highly relevant as a significant proportion of Danes spend longer than half an hour in the sun when UV rays are strongest.

Over 90% of respondents spent at least an hour outside on an average summer day. Children spent even longer outside than their parents. 87% of respondents stated that their youngest child spends more than 2 hours outside during an average summer day. 75% of adults and 61% of children spend over 30 minutes a day between 12.00 and 15.00 in the sun if they are not at work or kindergarten/school and if the sun is shining. Among 7-12 year olds, this figure increases to 86%.

Sunburn is widespread

Sunburn is a clear risk factor for skin cancer and reports have shown that many Danes get burnt during the summer. 44% of respondents were sunburnt during the summer of 2009 and 34% of respondents stated that their youngest child had been sunburnt during the summer.

Sunbathers are at greater risk of sunburn

The survey revealed that people who sunbathe (intentional tanners) get burnt more often than the rest of the population. Among those who stated that they 'use every opportunity to sunbathe' over half had been sunburnt. Typical outdoor activities that are not connected with sunbathing – such as gardening, walking etc. – carry a reduced risk of sunburn. People who do sport or barbecue run a higher risk even though these activities are not connected with sunbathing. People who work outside are not at a higher risk of sunburn.

46% of the respondents had been on holiday in the sun in 2009. Those who had been on holidays in

southern Europe were sunburnt more – both adults and children – than the rest of the population. A quarter of those who had been on a sunshine holiday reported being sunburnt.

Following the campaign sun safety messages reduces sunburn

The two sun safety messages of the campaign that were best remembered and followed by the respondents were to seek shade between 12.00 and 15.00 and to use sunscreen. From the survey, there is a clear relationship between following the sun safety messages and a reduced risk of sunburn. However, there is a difference in risk dependent on the sun safety messages followed. Using protective clothing and seeking shade is associated with a lower risk of sunburn whereas sunscreen use is associated with a higher risk. This is mostly because many people use sunscreen in connection with sunbathing, or other high-risk behaviour in the sun, and also because they use insufficient sunscreen or spend too long in the sun.

The campaign has a high awareness rating

88% of respondents were aware of the Danish sun safety campaign and 80% had heard the campaign slogan 'Reduce Your Sun between 12 and 3 pm'. A fifth of respondents stated they have changed their behaviour in the sun because of the campaign.

Developments from 2007-2009

There were just as many people sunburnt in 2009 as in 2008. In both years, the proportion of people who had been sunburnt was higher than in the previous years 2006 and 2007. This is most probably because the summers of 2008 and 2009 were hotter and sunnier.

In the period 2007 – 2009 there has been a drop in the number of people who follow the sun safety message to seek shade. On the other hand the number of people using sunscreen has increased – especially among men. From 2008-2009 there has been an increase in the proportion of people who wear clothes that cover their bodies, upper arms and thighs between 12.00 and 15.00.