



Sun Survey 2008

A survey of the sun habits of the Danish population during the summer of 2008.

Full report published in Danish by the Danish Cancer Society and TrygFonden, May 2009.

Danish title: "Solundersøgelsen 2008 – en kortlægning af danskernes solvaner"

Summary

This report provides an overview of the sun habits of the Danish population in the summer 2008. It is based on a representative survey carried out following the summer 2008 among 4,277 respondents aged 15-64. Respondents were asked about their behaviour in the sun in Denmark and on holiday abroad, their use of sunbeds and their knowledge of and attitudes towards the sun. They were asked about the Danish sun safety campaign and its four key safety messages: siesta, sun hat, sunscreen and turn off the sunbed. Similar surveys were carried out in 2007 and 2006 enabling comparison.

The aim of this report to gain an understanding of the sun habits of the Danes for use in future sun safety campaigns. We know that sunburn, overexposure to UV rays and using sunbeds increases the risk of skin cancer later in life. In particular, sunburn during childhood and early use of sunbeds increases this risk.

Sunburn still prevalent among adults and children

The survey shows that a large proportion of people experience sunburn during the summer. Among the respondents

, 44% had experienced sunburn in the summer of 2008. This figure is also high for children. A third of parents answered that their youngest child had been sunburnt. There has been an increase in the proportion of sunburnt people from the summers of 2006 to 2008. The most probable explanation is that the summer of 2008 was hotter and sunnier than previous summers. Sunbathers, in particular, experience sunburn.

Sunbeds most popular among young people

A quarter of Danes between 15 and 64 years old had used a sunbed within the past year. 13% used sunbeds at least once a month. Sunbed use is highest among 15-19 year olds with 44% having used a sunbed in the past year. However, sunbed use among this group is falling, as before the campaign started this figure was 51%. The survey also shows that people start using sunbeds at a younger age. Among 15-19 year olds, 21% had started using sunbeds before they turned 14. There is also a social difference in sunbed use. Those with shorter education or vocational training use sunbeds more, as do their children.

A high campaign awareness

There is a high awareness of the sun safety campaign. 85.8% had heard of the campaign that informs about how to protect against the sun and 73.3% had heard the slogan 'Reduce Your Sun between 12 and 15'.

Among those who had heard of the campaign, 18.5% had changed their attitude towards the sun. This was especially true for younger people and parents of small children. The survey also showed that those who knew the campaign followed the sun safety messages more than those who were not aware of the campaign.

Sun safety messages followed

The main campaign messages followed are to seek shade between 12 and 15 and to use sunscreen. Sunscreen is the sun safety message that was best remembered. The sun safety messages about sunhats and protective clothing that covers upper arms and thighs were less followed and mostly by men.

The survey does not show that following the sun safety messages leads to less sunburn. However, clothes have a protective effect so those who wear protective clothing experienced less sunburn. Among those who used sunscreen, more people had experienced sunburn when compared with those who did not use sunscreen.

Correct use of sunscreen use needs to be communicated

Sunbathing, despite the risks involved, is widespread. 65% of respondents had sunbathed to get a tan during the summer. Sunbathers in particular use sunscreen and 68% of them believe that by doing so they can spend longer in the sun. This might be a possible explanation to the link between sunscreen use and an increased incidence of sunburn. Other explanations could be that many people use insufficient sunscreen so they do not achieve full protection. Communicating the correct use of sunscreen is therefore a central issue for the sun safety campaign team.

Sun safety messages are getting through to parents

Parents, especially those with small children, are receptive to the messages of the sun safety campaign. This group spends a lot of time outside and uses the sun safety messages to protect against the sun to a greater degree than those without children living at home. This applies to both fathers and mothers. In particular, parents with children aged 0-6 have changed their behaviour as a consequence of the campaign.

Parents (as a group) experienced less sunburn in 2008 than in 2006 despite a general increase in sunburn. The survey did not show that children were less sunburnt. The proportion that had experienced that their youngest child was sunburnt increased from 2007 to 2008.

Young people still take risks but are aware of the campaign

The teenagers in the survey have a high-risk profile when it comes to their behaviour in the sun. A large proportion sunbathes and uses sunbeds. Many of them were sunburnt during the summer. However, the survey also indicates that the campaign messages have got through to some young people. Many of them are more aware of the campaign than the older groups and a large proportion of young people report they have changed their behaviour because of it.