

Photoaging

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Despite ubiquitous messages about melanoma and other types of skin cancer, some sun worshippers and frequent tanning salon visitors are just not taking the warnings seriously. But making them realize that too much sun can make them look older may just do the trick, the Canadian Dermatology Association hopes.

The focus of this year's National Sun Awareness Week, which runs through Sunday, is photoaging -- premature aging of the skin caused by harmful ultraviolet rays.

Brownish sun spots, uneven skin tone, spider veins on the face, wrinkles and sagging skin are all unwanted, preventable side-effects of tanning, the CDA says.

According to an Angus Reid poll, eight in 10 Canadians are unaware that repeated exposure to sunlight is a major contributor to skin changes on the face and the backs of hands. Many believe brown spots and wrinkles are only part of the natural aging process.

And only 40 per cent of those surveyed said they would avoid tanning of any kind.

Windsor dermatologist Dr. Dan Radin said he constantly sees patients who insist on tanning despite developing unsightly marks and wrinkles on their skin -- or even skin cancer.

"Maybe if we stress that (tanning) makes them look older, that will make them think twice," he said.

Radin said it's best to always protect your skin with a high SPF sunscreen, wear hats and stay in the shade whenever possible. For those who are worried about a vitamin D deficiency, Radin said inexpensive vitamin supplements are readily available in stores.

For more information about photoaging and skin cancer, visit www.dermatology.ca.

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