

Sun protection in adolescents: knowledge and attitudes

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Introduction: According to the Portuguese Association of Skin Cancer, adolescents' behaviors related to sun exposure are generally risky. It is crucial to avoid the deleterious effects of ultraviolet radiation (UV), which can occur 10-20 years later after the exposition to sunlight.

Objectives: To assess the knowledge and attitudes of adolescents about sun protection.

Methods: This is a cross sectional study, that was performed by anonymous questionnaires (N = 532) in a school. Data was processed with SPSS v15.0.

Results: The median age was 16.5 years and the gender distribution was similar between males and females. Forty percent resided in the city and the others on the surroundings. The phototype III was the most prevalent (42%), followed by the phototype IV (29%). Fifty four percent of the adolescents suffered rarely/never a sunburn and the majority tanned with relative ease, but only 69% uses protection. The sun protection measures are used only on the beach by 58% of the sample, in the hours of higher UV intensity by 27% and at any time by 8%. Twenty-five percent of phototypes I and II don't use any sun protection, the same occurring in 30% of the phototypes III and IV and 38% of V and VI. Seventy percent of the adolescents use the sunscreen only on the beach and 59% do so because their parents ask them. The sunscreen is used alone in 60% of the cases and 27% uses other measures. Of the adolescents with phototype I and II, 55% use protective factor less than 30, but 81% of the remaining phototypes use a factor greater than or equal to 15. The average time between the application of the sunscreen and the sun exposure was 22 minutes and the renewal of the sunscreen was performed, at average, every 3 hours. The low cosmeticity is the major disadvantage of using the sunscreen and 52% of the adolescents don't like to use it, while 22% says it is unnecessary. Only 24% of the cases say that the sunscreen is indispensable and 45% of the sample recognize the risks of the non-use. Its importance is reinforced mainly by the family, friends and health professionals. The use of tanning creams is reported by 25% and only 1% referred it is not a form of sun protection. The hat/cap is used by 9% of the adolescents, the sunglasses by 20% and the lip protector by 21%. The average beach arrival time in the morning is 9:30 a.m., and the return at 12.20 and in the afternoon they go, at average, at 14h45, to "have more time in the beach" (47%) and because "this is the best schedule" (22%).

Conclusions: Incorrect sun exposure, even intermittently, is associated with increased risk of skin malignancy. Given this results, it is essential to continue to educate our adolescents about this topic, to prevent all the risks they are subjected to.

Preference: Poster