

# Primary and secondary skin cancer prevention can still be improved!

PHOTOPROTECTION

HOT TOPIC

About 232,000 new melanoma cases are diagnosed worldwide every year, according to the World Health Organization.<sup>1</sup> Although multiple genetic and phenotypic risk factors have been documented throughout the literature, the main causal factor remains sun exposure. Despite better awareness, melanoma incidence and mortality have not been reduced.

This international survey, conducted by La Roche-Posay and IPSOS, provides insight into patients' sun exposure and skin cancer prevention habits all around the world.<sup>2</sup>

The study included 19,569 men and women aged between 15 and 65, from 23 countries. Several variables were analyzed: geographical area, country, age, gender, socioeconomic status, level of education, parental status, outdoor occupation and phototype.



Sunscreens and sunglasses remain the most frequently used preventative measures, far ahead of using protective clothes such as long sleeves, hats or caps. There is no country singularity on sunscreen usage; the champions are Southern Europe for the face and Western Europe for the body with were particularly more likely than the average of overall respondents to protect the face and their body. Respondents from Australia exhibited a more diverse set of protective behaviors. Nevertheless, sun bathing, especially during the summer vacation, is still a habit for people in Southern and Western Europe, although they are more likely than the average respondent to use sunscreen on their bodies and face. In Latin America, sun avoidance is more common.

Most parents are aware of the risks of sun exposure, and applying sunscreen to children under 12 is the most common sun-protection behavior (87%). However, promoting protective clothes and sunglasses is also important at that age to reduce the risk of melanoma later in life.



Generally, awareness of the risks associated with sun exposure and the early signs of skin cancer is high, but skin screening (through self-examination once a month or by a dermatologist once a year) remains insufficient. Patients from Australia, Ireland, Brazil and Greece appear better informed than subjects from Mexico, Italy and Russia. Young people, especially men, and people from lower socioeconomic groups or with lower educational attainment should be specifically targeted by campaigns on sun exposure risks.

Skin cancer screening is part of a comprehensive evaluation considering individual risk factors like skin phototype and number and size of moles. Increasing patient awareness makes it possible to identify early signs of melanoma through self-examination. Everyone should seek medical advice at least once a year to improve the prognosis in melanoma cases.

Sun safe behaviors are still low. Related ongoing education is still required.

Reducing the risk of melanoma is a challenge not only for dermatologists, pediatricians or general practitioners but also for patients through their awareness of sun exposure and protection.

## Bibliography

1. American Cancer Society. Cancer Facts & Figures 2016 (2016).

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2. Public primary and secondary skin cancer prevention, perceptions and knowledge: an international cross-sectional survey.

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