

# How to Improve Adolescents' Sun Protection Behavior? Age and Gender Issues

Christine Paul, PhD; Flora Tzelepis, BSc; Nicholas Parfitt, BA; Afaf Girgis, PhD

---

**Objective:** To explore adolescents' self-reported reasons for sun protection, as adolescents as a group continue to have poor sun protection practices. **Methods:** Seventeen age- and gender-segregated focus groups were conducted in Australian high schools. **Results:** Reasons for using sun protection included personal comfort, appearance, policies, fear of skin cancer, expectations of authority figures, peer actions, and habit. Reasons

for not using sun protection included desire for a tan, inconvenience, low perceived risk, and fashion. Age and gender effects were found. **Conclusions:** Avenues for intervention with adolescents include authority figures, peer advocacy, the fashion industry, and improved sun protection products.

**Key words:** skin cancer, sun protection, adolescents, perceptions, barriers

*Am J Health Behav.* 2008;32(4):387-398

---