



Dangers of Sun Exposure

Being outside on a warm, sunny day is one of life's great pleasures for children, but studies suggest that childhood sunburns are linked to adult skin cancer (the majority of most people's sun exposure occurs before age twenty). Even one or two blistering sunburns during childhood may double the risk of melanoma later in life. Here's how to protect your children from the sun's harmful effects:



Always Use Sunscreen

A sunscreen with sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 15 blocks most harmful UV radiation.

Apply sunscreen liberally before your children go outside, and reapply every two hours if they have been perspiring or swimming. Even waterproof sunscreens can come off when a child towels off sweat or water.

Children under two years of age should not be exposed to direct sun for long periods of time and should never have sunscreen applied to their skin. Instead, dress them in clothing that shields them from the sun.

Tip: When you call sunscreen "sun goo," chances are you'll have an easier time convincing your child to use it.



Use Protective Eyewear for Children

Sunglasses that provide 99% to 100% UVB protection will greatly reduce sun exposure that can lead to cataracts and other eye damage.

Get Some Shade with Sun Hats

A hat with a wide brim offers good sun protection to children's eyes, ears, face, and the back of their necks -- areas particularly prone to overexposure to the sun.

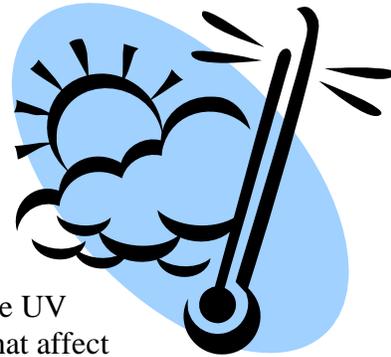
Cover Up! Wearing long-sleeved shirts and pants during prolonged periods in the sun will protect your children from overexposure. In the warm months, lightweight, loose-fitting clothes are best. If it's too warm to wear long sleeves, encourage your children to play in the shade.

Avoid the Midday Sun

The sun's UV rays are strongest between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. To the extent you can, limit your outside activities during these hours.

Watch for the UV Index

The UV Index, developed by the National Weather Service and the Environmental Protection Agency, indicates the degree of caution you should take when working, playing, or exercising outdoors, based on a forecast of the expected risk of overexposure to the sun. The UV Index predicts exposure levels on a 0 to 10+ scale, where 0 indicates a low risk of overexposure, and 10+ means a very high risk of overexposure. Calculated on a next-day basis for dozens of cities across the U.S. by the National Weather Service, the UV Index takes into account clouds and other local conditions that affect the amount of UV radiation reaching the ground in different parts of the country. Check the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's UV index map, updated daily.



Adapted from an article by the United States Environmental Protection Agency's Stratospheric Protection Division.