

Play it Safe in the Sun

A Guide for Parents



Choose Your Cover

Hey Moms and Dads! Not all sun protection comes in a bottle. There are lots of ways to protect your child's skin all year long. Here are five you can try.

1. Hide and Seek. UV rays are strongest and most harmful during midday, so it's best to plan indoor activities then. If this is not possible, seek shade under a tree, an umbrella or a pop-up tent. Use these options to prevent sunburn, not to seek relief once it's happened.



2. Cover 'em Up. Clothing that covers your child's skin helps protect against UV rays. Although a long-sleeved shirt and long pants with a tight weave are best, they aren't always practical. A T-shirt, long shorts or a beach cover-up are good choices, too — but it's wise to double up on protection by applying sunscreen or keeping your child in the shade when possible.

3. Get a Hat. Hats that shade the face, scalp, ears, and neck are easy to use and give great protection. Baseball caps are popular among kids but they don't protect their ears and neck. If your child chooses a cap, be sure to protect exposed areas with sunscreen.



4. Shades Are Cool. And they protect your child's eyes from UV rays, which can lead to



cataracts later in life. Look for sunglasses that wrap around and block as close to 100% of both UVA and UVB rays as possible.

5. Rub on Sunscreen. Use sunscreen with at least SPF 15 and UVA/UVB protection every time your child goes outside.



Sunscreen Scoop

Sunscreen may be easy, but it doesn't protect your child's skin completely. Try combining sunscreen with other "Choose Your Cover" options to prevent UV damage. Sunscreen comes in a variety of forms — lotions, sprays, wipes, or gels. Be sure to choose one made especially for kids with:

- Sun Protection Factor (SPF) of 15 or higher
- Both UVA and UVB protection

For most effective protection, apply sunscreen generously 30 minutes before going outdoors. And, don't forget to protect ears, noses, lips, and the tops of feet which often go unprotected.

Take sunscreen with you to reapply during the day, especially after your child swims or exercises. This applies to "waterproof" and "water resistant" products as well.

Keep in mind, sunscreen is not meant to allow your kids to spend more time in the sun than they would otherwise. Sunscreen reduces damage from UV radiation, it doesn't eliminate it.

The American Academy of Pediatrics now advises that sunscreen use on babies less than 6 months old is not harmful on small areas of a baby's skin, such as the face and back of the hands. But your baby's best defense against sunburn is avoiding the sun or staying in the shade.

Protect the Skin They're In

Too Much Sun Hurts

Did you know that just a few serious sunburns can increase your child's risk of skin cancer later in life? Kids don't have to be at the pool, beach, or on vacation to get too much sun. Their skin needs protection from the sun's harmful ultraviolet (UV) rays whenever they're outdoors.

Turning pink? Unprotected skin can be damaged by the sun's UV rays in as little as 15 minutes. Yet it can take up to 12 hours for skin to show the full effect of sun exposure. So, if your child's skin looks "a little pink" today, it may be burned tomorrow morning. To prevent further burning, get your child out of the sun.

Tan? There's no other way to say it — tanned skin is damaged skin. Any change in the color of your child's skin after time outside — whether sunburn or suntan — indicates damage from UV rays.

Cool and cloudy? Children still need protection. UV rays, not the temperature, do the damage. Clouds do not block UV rays, they filter them — and sometimes only slightly.

Oops! Kids often get sunburned when they are outdoors unprotected for longer than expected. Remember to plan ahead, and keep sun protection handy — in your car, bag or child's backpack.

Parents, help your children play it safe in the sun and protect your own skin as well. You're an important role model.

When you play it safe, you're playing it smart.

For more information about protecting your family from skin cancer, contact:

- The National Cancer Institute's Cancer Information Service at 1-800-4-CANCER for information about all cancers, including skin cancer.
- CDC's Division of Cancer Prevention and Control at 1-888-842-6355 for recorded information or to order Choose Your Cover materials or posters.

Facts and Statistics About Skin Cancer

The number of skin cancer cases has increased in the United States. More than 1 million cases of basal cell or squamous cell cancer will be diagnosed in 2002. The most serious form of skin cancer, malignant melanoma, is expected to be diagnosed in 53,600 persons in 2002.¹ Since 1981, the incidence of melanoma has increased an average of 7 percent per year to a rate of 14.3 per 100,000 in 1997. Melanoma is the most common cancer among people 25 to 29 years old.

The three major types of skin cancer are basal cell carcinoma, squamous cell carcinoma, and melanoma.

Basal cell and squamous cell carcinomas can cause substantial illness and, if untreated, can cause considerable damage and disfigurement. If detected and treated early, however, these carcinomas have a cure rate of more than 95%

Malignant melanoma causes more than 75% of all deaths from skin cancer. This disease can spread to other organs, most commonly the lungs and liver. Malignant melanoma diagnosed at an early stage usually can be cured, but melanoma diagnosed at a late stage is more likely to spread and cause death.

Exposure to the sun's ultraviolet (UV) rays appears to be the most important environmental factor in developing skin cancer. This makes skin cancer a largely preventable disease when sun protective practices and behaviors are consistently applied and utilized. UV radiation is also a factor in the development of lip cancer, making sun protection even more important. UV rays from artificial sources of light, such as tanning beds and sun lamps are just as dangerous as those from the sun, and should also be avoided. Unfortunately, despite the fact that both tanning and burning can increase one's risk of skin cancer, most Americans do not protect themselves from UV rays.

Who Is at Risk?

Although anyone can get skin cancer, individuals with certain risk factors are particularly at risk. Some risk factors for skin cancer are ---

- Lighter natural skin color
- Family history of skin cancer

- Personal history of skin cancer
- Constant exposure to the sun through work and play
- A history of sunburns early in life
- Skin that burns, freckles, gets red easily, or becomes painful in the sun
- Blue or green eyes
- Blond or red hair
- Certain types and a large number of moles

¹Source: Cancer Facts and Figures 2002, American Cancer Society, 2002.