

# SUN SAFETY AND SUNSCREEN RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INFANTS AND CHILDREN

Children are highly susceptible to harmful ultraviolet (UV) radiation, since 80 percent of lifetime sun exposure occurs before the age of 18. Just one or two blistering sunburns in childhood may double the risk of developing melanoma (skin cancer). Teaching children about sun safety is the key to reducing the risk of future health problems.

## Safe Sun habits

-  **Stay inside or limit sun exposure during the sun's peak hours 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.** Remember the shadow rule: Watch your shadow. No shadow, seek shade!
-  **Refer to the daily UV index when planning outdoor events.** The UV Index is a daily forecast of the intensity of the sun's UV rays. The Index gives information about the risks of skin-damaging UV radiation and can be used to help plan outdoor activities to minimize sun overexposure. Refer to the website <http://epa.gov/sunwise/uvindex.html>
-  **Limit exposure to the reflective surfaces like snow and water.** UV rays can bounce off of sand, tile, concrete, water, snow, and buildings. It is important to practice all the sun protective behaviors even when you are in the shade.
-  **Seek shade whenever possible from trees or umbrellas.** Although trees do not offer complete sun protection, they provide about 60 percent blockage from the sun's rays.
-  **Cover up with tightly woven, loose fitting and full length clothing, sunglasses and wide brimmed hats.** Sunglasses that provide 99-100% percent of UVA and UVB will reduce sun exposure and provide protection from eye damage.
-  **Use a "broad spectrum" sunscreen with a Sun Protection Factor (SPF) of at least 15 or higher.** Choose a water proof or water resistant sunscreen.
-  **Apply sunscreen at least 30 minutes before going outside.** Thoroughly rub sunscreen and make sure all skin is covered. Reapply every 2 hours throughout the day as needed. Use sunscreen even on cloudy days.
-  **Check sunscreen's expiration date.** Sunscreen without an expiration date has a shelf life of no more than three years, but its shelf life is shorter if exposed to high temperatures
-  **Sunscreen may not be applied to broken skin or rash.**
-  **Babies under 6 months of age should be kept out of the direct sunlight.** Dress babies in lightweight clothing that covers the arms, legs and use brimmed hats
-  **Written authorization from the health care provider is necessary for babies less than 6 months of age that attend child care.** The American Academy of Pediatrics 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.

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

## Resources

- American Academy of Pediatrics <http://www.aap.org>
- Centers for Disease Control <https://www.cdc.org>
- Skin Cancer Foundation <http://www.skincancer.org>
- SunWise Kids <http://www.epa.gov/sunwise/index.html>