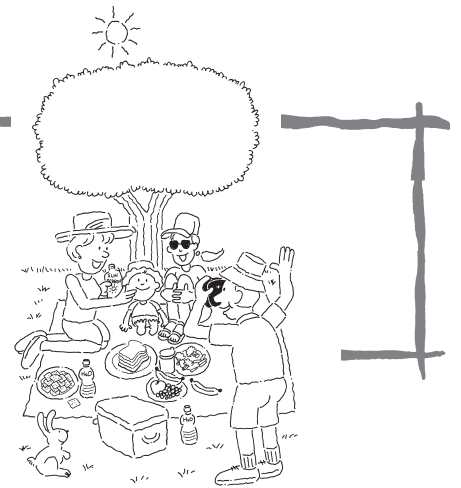


# Fun in the Sun: Keep Your Family Safe



Warm, sunny days are wonderful. It's great to exercise outside. The sun feels good on your skin. But what feels good can harm you and your family. Read on about why the following sun safety tips are important for your family.

## The sun and skin cancer

The sun gives energy to all living things on earth. But it can also harm us. Its ultraviolet (UV) rays can damage skin and eyes and cause skin cancer. All skin cancers are harmful and some, especially malignant melanoma, can be deadly.

One-quarter of our lifetime sun exposure happens during childhood and adolescence. Since children spend a lot of time outdoors, especially in the summer, it's important they be protected from the sun.

Research shows that 2 or more blistering sunburns as a child or teen can increase the risk of melanoma skin cancer later in life. Sunburns can also be very painful. Too much sun exposure can cause other problems too, such as

- Dehydration and fever
- Damage to skin, like changes in color and wrinkles
- Cataracts of the eye

## Sun safety tips

Follow these simple rules to protect your family from sunburns now and from skin cancer later in life.

- Keep babies younger than 6 months out of direct sunlight. Find shade under a tree, umbrella, or the stroller canopy.
- When possible, dress yourself and your kids in cool, comfortable clothing that covers the body, like lightweight cotton pants, long-sleeved shirts, and hats.
- Select clothes made with a tight weave—they protect better than clothes with a looser weave. If you're not sure how tight a fabric's weave is, hold it up to see how much light shines through. The less light, the better.
- Wear a hat or cap with a brim that faces forward to shield the face.
- Limit your sun exposure between 10:00 am and 4:00 pm, when UV rays are strongest.
- Wear sunglasses with at least 99% UV protection (look for child-sized sunglasses with UV protection for your child).
- Use sunscreen.
- Set a good example. You can be the best teacher by practicing sun protection yourself. Teach all members of your family how to protect their skin and eyes.

## Sunscreen

Sunscreen can help protect the skin from sunburn and some skin cancers, but only if used correctly. Keep in mind that sunscreen should be used for sun protection, not as a reason to stay in the sun longer.

## How to pick sunscreen

- Use a sunscreen that says "broad-spectrum" on the label—that means it will screen out both UVB and UVA rays.
- Use a sunscreen with an SPF (sun protection factor) of at least 15. The higher the SPF, the more UVB protection the sunscreen has.
- Look for the new UVA "star" rating system on the label.
  - One star is low UVA protection.
  - Two stars is medium protection.
  - Three stars is high protection.
  - Four stars is the highest UVA protection available in an over-the-counter sunscreen product.
- For sensitive areas of the body, such as the nose, cheeks, tops of the ears, and the shoulders, choose a sunscreen or sunblock with zinc oxide or titanium dioxide. While these products usually stay visible on the skin even after you rub them in, some now come in fun colors that kids enjoy.

## Sunscreen for babies

- **For babies younger than 6 months.** Use sunscreen on small areas of the body, such as the face and the backs of the hands, if protective clothing and shade are not available.
- **For babies older than 6 months.** Apply to all areas of the body, but be careful around the eyes. If your baby rubs sunscreen into her eyes, wipe the eyes and hands clean with a damp cloth. If the sunscreen irritates her skin, try a different brand or try a sunscreen stick or sunscreen or sunblock with titanium dioxide or zinc oxide. If a rash develops, talk with your child's doctor.

## How to apply sunscreen

- Use enough sunscreen to cover *all* exposed areas, especially the face, nose, ears, feet, and hands and even the backs of the knees. Rub it in well.
- Put sunscreen on 30 minutes before going outdoors. It needs time to absorb into the skin.
- Use sunscreen any time you or your child might sunburn. Remember that you can get sunburn even on cloudy days. Also, UV rays can bounce back from water, sand, snow, and concrete so make sure you're protected.
- Reapply sunscreen *every 2 hours*. Sunscreen wears off after swimming, sweating, or just from soaking into the skin.

## Sunburns

### When to call the doctor

If your baby is younger than 1 year and gets sunburn, call your child's doctor right away. For older children, call your child's doctor if there is blistering, pain, or fever.

## How to soothe sunburn

The following are ways to relieve discomfort from mild sunburn:

- Give water or juice to replace lost fluids.
- Use cool water to help the skin feel better.
- Give your child pain medicine to relieve painful sunburns. (For a baby 6 months or younger, give acetaminophen. For a child older than 6 months, give either acetaminophen or ibuprofen.)
- Only use medicated lotions on your child's skin if your child's doctor says it is OK.
- Keep your child out of the sun until the sunburn is totally healed.

## Sun myths

**Myth:** A suntan is good for you.

**Fact:** Wrong! We now know that a "base tan" does not really protect you from getting sunburn. In fact, it may increase the chance you'll get sunburn by thinking you can stay out in the sun longer. A tan is actually a sign of skin damage.

**Myth:** Baby oil is good sun lotion.

**Fact:** No! Baby oil offers no protection at all.

**Myth:** Only adults can get skin cancer so putting sunscreen on children is not really necessary.

**Fact:** While most of the people who get skin cancer are older, children, teens, and young adults can get it too. Also, too many sunburns and too much sun exposure over the years can cause not only skin cancer, but also wrinkles and cataracts of the eye. Skin cancer is the most common form of cancer in the United States. According to the American Cancer Society, there are more than 1 million new cases of skin cancer each year.

## Are tanning beds safe for teens?

Having a tan is often considered fashionable, especially among young people. A lot of teens are turning to tanning beds to get that "healthy glow" of a tan all year round. But tanning at a salon is dangerous! Like the natural sun, tanning beds give off UV rays that can cause sunburns and skin cancer. UV exposure early in life—including during teen years—increases the chances of skin cancer even more.

Sunless tanning lotions, sprays, and airbrush tanning booths are becoming a popular option. These products contain a chemical that darkens the skin. The tan usually lasts for several days. However, all sunless tanning products, no matter how they are applied, can cause side effects such as skin rashes and irritation. They should also be kept away from the eyes, nose, and mouth. *Most of these products do not include sunscreen, so skin is not protected from the "real" sun. Anyone using a sunless tanner must also use a sunscreen.*

The information contained in this publication should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your pediatrician. There may be variations in treatment that your pediatrician may recommend based on individual facts and circumstances.

## From your doctor

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