

SUN PROTECTION

Playing outdoors, swimming, and sun - all of these come to mind when we think of summer. But before exploring the great outdoors, remember that sun exposure may pose serious health hazards. We need to remind ourselves about sun safety.

The best way to prevent the long-term risks of sunburn (cancer, premature aging, sagging skin, and brown spots) is to educate ourselves about sun protection.

1. There is no such thing as a good tan.
2. Use sunscreen to prevent sun damage every time you're outside.
 - Use a product with at least a SPF 15 (up to SPF 50) and which protects against both UVA and UVB rays ("broad-spectrum"). Try to avoid the sunscreen ingredient oxybenzone because it may have mild hormonal properties. Use a water resistant product for water activities.
 - Apply the sunscreen to all exposed areas at least 15 to 30 minutes before exposure to sun, and at least every 2 hours while in the sun. Water resistant sunscreens will protect anywhere from 40 to 80 minutes depending on the formulation. The label will state either "water resistant (40 minutes)" or "water resistant (80 minutes)." Reapply accordingly.
 - Pay special attention to the nose, cheeks, ears, neck, and shoulders. Use a lip balm with sunscreen
 - Sunscreen may be used for infants under six months of age, but sun exposure should be very limited. Use on small areas such as the face and hands, if protective clothing and shade are not available.
 - Use sunscreen even on cloudy days
 - If your child rubs sunscreen into her eyes, wipe her eyes and hands with a damp cloth. If sunscreen irritates your child's skin try a different brand or one with titanium dioxide or zinc oxide
3. Have your child wear a hat with an all-around 3 inch brim and sunglasses that screen out 99% of UVB and UVA rays from the eyes.
4. Sunburns during childhood or adolescence contribute to the development of melanomas (skin cancer) later in life.
5. Additional steps to take:
 - Keep infants out of direct sun.
 - Watch the time, both to limit exposure and reapply sunscreen. Avoid sun exposure mid-day when burning rays peak (10 am to 4pm).

- Cover up your child whenever possible.
- Be aware that reflected light from sand or water increase exposure and requires extra attention to sun protection.
- Be especially careful at higher altitudes and latitudes closer to the equator.
- Strictly avoid artificial tanning devices.
- Don't mix sun with certain medications such as sulfa-based antibiotics.