



Sun protection and young children



Outdoor play and physical activity are important for the health and wellbeing of young children. When they are outdoors, children need to be protected from overexposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun.

Young children's sensitive skin is at higher risk of the harmful effects of overexposure to UV radiation. Children's skin has less natural protection than adult skin and can burn quickly. Frequent sun exposure without protection in childhood increases the risk of skin cancer later in life. Babies and young children should be protected from exposure to UV radiation from the day they are born. Sun damage adds up over time, so it is never too early to protect their skin.

You can take steps now to protect young children from the sun and reduce their future risk of skin cancer.

Schedule outdoor play early in the morning or later in the afternoon. Plan daily activities to make sure your child is protected from the sun. Minimise time outside during the middle of the day when UV levels are highest. When this is not possible, make sure your child is protected from the sun by shade, sunscreen, protective clothing, a hat, and if appropriate, wraparound sunglasses that meet the AS/NZS1067 standards. Check that your child's clothing and hat and the position of shade are always protecting them from UV.

UV and sun damage

The UV Index tells you how strong the UV levels will be during the day. When UV levels are 3 (moderate) or above, multiple forms of sun protection measures are needed. In Queensland, UV levels are 3 or above all year round, meaning sun protection is needed every day.

UV radiation can reflect off surfaces such as sand, grass, and concrete. Even if babies and children are in the shade, they will still need other types of sun protection.

On overcast or cool days UV radiation can still penetrate through cloud cover and have similar levels to a warm,

sunny day, so sun damage can still occur which is why sun protection is still needed.

To check when sun protection is needed, download the free SunSmart UV Alert app. Or check the UV levels at www.bom.gov.au/uv/

Babies and exposure to sun

Babies under 12 months should not be exposed to direct sun when UV levels are 3 or above. If you can't avoid sun exposure, protect your baby using a combination of sun protection measures.

Exposing babies to direct sun is not recommended to treat jaundice or nappy rash. This can place them at high risk of sunburn and skin damage. Jaundice should be treated under medical supervision in a controlled environment. Don't treat nappy rash by exposure to the direct sun. Talk to your doctor or pharmacist about the best treatment.

Children and sunscreen

Babies

Using sunscreen on babies under six months of age is not recommended. Babies are more likely to suffer a reaction because of their sensitive skin.

If you choose to use sunscreen occasionally on small parts of your baby's skin, choose a sunscreen that is suitable for babies. Sunscreen for babies usually uses different ingredients to reduce the chance of skin reactions. Talk to your doctor or pharmacist about the best sunscreen to use. If your baby does suffer a reaction to a sunscreen, stop using the product and seek medical attention.

Toddlers

Check sunscreen labels or ask your doctor or pharmacist which sunscreen is best for your toddler.

Role Modelling

Sun protective behaviour is important for your health and for your child's health. Children often copy those around them and learn by imitation. If you use sun protection behaviours, children are more likely to do the same.



Slip, Slop, Slap, Seek and Slide

SLIP ON SUN PROTECTIVE CLOTHING



- Slip on clothing that covers as much skin as possible
- Choose shirts with collars and longer sleeves
- Choose longer shorts, skirts and dresses
- Choose cool, loose-fitting clothes made from closely woven fabrics
- Some fabrics have a UV protection factor (UPF) rating. The higher the UPF, the greater the protection provided by the fabric. Choose fabrics with at least UPF15 (good protection) up to UPF50 (excellent protection).

SLOP ON SPF30 OR HIGHER SUNSCREEN



- Slop on broad-spectrum water-resistant sunscreen. Use sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 30 or above. For babies and children, see the section above for the best sunscreen to use, or talk to your doctor or pharmacist
- Apply sunscreen 20 minutes before going outside. Reapply every two hours, or more often if your child is swimming, or if the sunscreen is wiped or washed off.

SLAP ON A HAT



- Slap on a broad-brimmed, bucket or legionnaire style hat so the face, neck and ears are protected. Caps do not give adequate protection from the sun
- For young babies, choose a fabric that is soft and moves easily when they put their head down
- Think about the hat's size and comfort, and if it gives enough shade to the face. Make sure it doesn't obstruct vision, hearing or safety
- Choose a hat that can be adjusted at the crown, so it stays on.

SEEK SHADE



- Set up outdoor play activities in shaded areas
- Use a shade cover for prams and strollers
- Use a shade cover for the side car windows. Side and back windows don't offer as much protection as the front windscreen
- When buying a pram, look for one with an adjustable handle so you can change the direction your baby is facing. This will help avoid direct sun exposure. Check that the hood can be adjusted, so that it can be moved to block out the direct sun
- Pack your own portable shade when going out – take an umbrella or beach shelter.

SLIDE ON SUNGLASSES



- Slide on sunglasses to protect the eyes and delicate skin around the eyes
- Choose sunglasses that meet the Australian Standard AS/ NZS 1067. Sunglasses should be close fitted, with a wraparound style to cover as much of the eyes as possible. Some infant sunglasses have soft elastic to keep them in place
- Toy or fashion-labelled sunglasses do not meet the Australian Standards. They should not be used for sun protection.