

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.

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.
