

Sun Safety

Repeated exposure to the sun can increase the risk of developing skin cancer in the future. Most children rack up between 50% and 80% of their lifetime sun exposure before age 18. It's important that parents teach children how to enjoy fun in the sun safely.

Sun exposure is our primary source of vitamin D which helps us absorb calcium for stronger, healthier bones. It doesn't take much time in the sun for most people to get the Vitamin D they need. Unprotected exposure to the sun's ultraviolet (UV) rays can cause skin damage, eye damage, immune system suppression, and even cancer.



Ways to Protect Your Child From the Sun

- Avoid the strongest rays of the sun - solar radiation is the strongest between 10:00 A.M. and 3:00 P.M.
- Cover up - wear a hat and use sunscreen - learn how to use it correctly - select a sunscreen rated SPF 15 or greater.
- Purchase protective eyewear for kids - not all sunglasses provide the same protection.
- Ask about your child's medication - some medications increase the skin's sensitivity to UV rays.
- Be a role model - wear sunscreen and sunglasses yourself.



Sunlight Contains three types of ultraviolet (UV) rays: UVA, UVB, and UVC

- UVA rays cause skin aging and wrinkling and contribute to skin cancer. Tanning beds also use UVA rays. A UVA tan does not protect the skin from sun damage.
- UVB rays cause sunburns, cataracts (clouding of the eye lens), and immune system damage and contribute to skin cancer. Melanoma, the most dangerous form of skin cancer is thought to be associated with severe UVB sunburns that occur before the age of 20.
- UVC rays are the most dangerous, but these rays are blocked by the ozone layer.



What to Do if Your Child Gets a Sunburn

Usually pain and the sensation of heat usually gets worse several hours after a sunburn. Children might also develop chills. The skin might become itchy and tight. The skin underneath the sunburn is vulnerable to infection, so try to keep the child from scratching or peeling off loose skin. If your child gets a sunburn:



- If the sunburn is severe and blisters develop, call your doctor. Until you can see the doctor, do not scratch, pop, or squeeze the blisters because they can become easily infected and can result in scarring.
- Keep your child in the shade until the sunburn has healed.
- Have your child take a cool (not cold) bath, or gently apply, cool wet compresses to the skin.
- Apply pure aloe vera gel.
- Give your child a pain reliever like acetaminophen or ibuprofen and spray on over-the-counter "after-sun" pain relievers. (Do not give aspirin to children or teens.)
- Apply topical moisturizing cream to rehydrate the skin and help reduce swelling. For the most severely burned areas, apply a thin layer of 1% hydrocortisone cream. (Do not use petroleum-based products, because they prevent excess heat and sweat from escaping. Avoid first-aid products that contain benzocaine, which may cause skin irritation or allergy.)