

## **Sun Safety for Children and Babies**

### **Looking after your children's skin**

Young skin is very delicate and easily damaged by the sun therefore, all children should be protected from the sun. We experience about one quarter of our total lifetime exposure to sun before we are 18 years and studies have shown that blistering sunburn in childhood can double the risk of developing melanoma in later life.

Parents and carers must take responsibility for protecting children's skin and eyes, as they cannot be expected to undertake sun protection themselves. Children (like adults) with fair or red hair, pale eyes or freckles are most at risk.

Keep babies under six months out of direct sunlight, especially around midday. **REMEMBER YOU CAN BURN IN THE UK AND EVEN WHEN IT'S CLOUDY!** So, take care at home as well as abroad.

### **Top tips for ensuring your children enjoy the sun safely**

- Use shade. Keep babies in complete shade - under umbrellas, trees, canopies or indoors;
- Cover children up. Dress them in cotton clothing that is loose fitting with a close-weave like an over-sized long-sleeved T-shirt or a sunsuit specifically designed for children;
- Do not put children in vest tops or sundresses if they are spending a lot of time outdoors - shoulders and necks get easily burned!;
- Protect head, shoulders and necks. Use bucket or surfie-style hats with a brim of at least 6cm (for primary school children and older) or 5cm (for pre-school children). The wider the brim the more skin will be shaded;
- Buy good quality, wraparound sunglasses;

- Apply a broad-band sunscreen correctly. Look for the 5 star rating when buying your sunscreen - 5 star products provide the best balanced protection against all UV rays. Use factor 30+ sunscreen before children go outdoors and re-apply once they are in the sun to be sure of good coverage. Think of applying sunscreen like painting a wall with a textured surface, where two coats are almost always required for satisfactory coverage. In the same way, two "coats of sunscreen" may be required for adequate protection;
- Lots of the brands of sunscreen have special baby or toddler products, which are much gentler on the skin. Some sunscreens are coloured and make applying them fun. Test the sunscreen on a small area of the child's skin before using it to make sure there won't be any reaction;
- Don't forget shoulders, ears, nose and cheeks and tops of feet;
- Always use waterproof sunscreen when children are swimming or playing outdoors with water;
- Always re-apply sunscreen after perspiring or after towelling;
- Don't forget school times; remember playtimes and lunch-breaks. Give children a hat to wear at school, and, if they can't apply sunscreen at school, cover their exposed skin with factor 30+ before they go;
- Act as a good role model and make adults set a good example when out in the sun.

Further resources are available for schools and nurseries.

<https://www.teenagecancertrust.org/shunburn-resources-download-form>

<http://www.skcin.org/downloads/SunSafeSummerActivityPack.pdf>

<https://www.sunsafenurseries.co.uk/>

<https://www.sunsafeschools.co.uk/resources/>