

## Sun Protection and Children

Exposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun during childhood is a major risk factor for the development of skin cancer and eye damage later in life.

Babies' skin in particular is thin, extremely sensitive and can burn easily. It is recommended that babies only be exposed to direct sunlight when the UV Index is below 3. These exposures should be for just a few minutes each day. Babies under 12 months of age should not receive direct sun exposure when UV levels are 3 or above.

### Why is sun protection important?

Overexposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun damages the skin and eyes and can lead to skin cancer. You cannot see or feel UV radiation, and you can get burnt on cool or cloudy days as easily as you can on hot sunny days. In fact, most people get burnt when the temperature is between 18 and 27 degrees.

Sun protection is required when the UV Index is 3 or above. To find the times of day when UV levels are forecast to be 3 or higher for your location, visit [myUV.com.au](http://myUV.com.au) or download the free SunSmart app.

UV levels are lower in the winter months, however skin damage can still occur with prolonged sun exposure. It is important to note that for areas north of Perth, midday UV radiation levels can reach 3 or above all year round.

### Be SunSmart. Protect yourself from skin cancer in five ways.

#### 1. SunSmart clothing

- Get children into the habit of wearing clothes that cover as much skin as possible. Choose closely woven fabrics and styles that are loose to allow airflow.
- Choose clothing that has a high ultraviolet protection factor (UPF). The higher the UPF, the better sun protection provided by the fabric. UPF50+ is optimal.
- For the beach or pool, choose sun protective swimsuits with a UPF of 50+, a hat and sunglasses. These swimsuits cover more skin than traditional bathers and retain their sun protective qualities when wet. Alternatively children can wear shirts and shorts over traditional bathers. However, these fabrics may not have a high UPF, and the protection provided will further decrease when wet.



#### 2. Slop on sunscreen

- Use clothing rather than sunscreen to cover most of your child's skin, then apply sunscreen to the small areas of skin that are not covered.
- The widespread use of sunscreen on babies under six months is not generally recommended.
- Some infants and children can develop skin irritations. A patch test on a small area of skin is recommended to check for allergies or reactions to a particular brand of sunscreen.
- Use SPF30 or higher, broad-spectrum, water-resistant sunscreen with a valid expiry date.
- Apply sunscreen by layering it on rather than rubbing it in.
- Apply sunscreen to clean, dry skin 20 minutes before planned sun exposure so that the sunscreen has time to adhere to the skin. We also recommend using sunscreen every day when the UV index is forecast to be 3 or above. Sunscreen should be incorporated into your daily morning routine on these days.
- The recommended application for **adults** is approximately one teaspoon for each arm, leg, front of body, back of body and face (including neck and ears). That equates to approximately seven teaspoons for a full body application. Application for **children** should be adjusted proportionately according to their body size.



### 3. Slap on a SunSmart hat

- Choose a hat that provides good shade to the face, back of the neck and ears.
- Broad-brimmed hats for children should have a brim **at least 6cm** wide. A broad-brimmed hat that provides good shade can considerably reduce the exposure of UV radiation to the face.
- Bucket or surfie style hats should have a deep crown and sit low on the head. The angled brim should be **at least 5cm** for children and provide the face, neck and ears with good protection from the sun.
- Legionnaire style hats should have a flap that covers the neck and meets the sides of the peak to provide protection to the side of the face.
- Baseball caps and sun visors are **NOT** adequate as they leave the ears and back of the neck exposed.
- Choose a hat with a closely woven fabric. When you hold the hat to the light, ideally no light should be seen through the fabric. If you can see through it, UV radiation will get through.
- Wearing a hat with a brim that shades the eyes can reduce UV radiation to the eyes by 50%.



### 4. Seek shade

- If outdoors, babies should be kept in the shade. Encourage children of all ages to play in shaded areas. Staying under a shade sail, tree, umbrella or built shade structure can reduce your overall exposure to UV by up to 75%.
- Be aware that shade does not provide 100% protection. UV radiation can be reflected from some surfaces such as sand, concrete, water and grass, so it is important to still wear a hat, protective clothing, sunscreen and sunglasses.
- When travelling with your children in the car, hang a shade visor over the door window. Car door windows are plain glass and allow more UV radiation through than windscreens which are laminated glass. Consider having the side windows of your car tinted with a UPF 50+ window film.
- When buying a pram, pusher or stroller, check that the hood can be adjusted so that it can be moved to block the sun.



### 5. Slide on sunglasses

- Sunglasses are available for children and babies. Children can be encouraged to wear sunglasses from an age when it becomes practical to do so.
- Check the swing tag for the Australian Standard number AS/NZS 1067.1:2016 or EPF10+ rating to ensure that the sunglasses block out sufficient UV radiation.
- Note that sunglasses sold as toys or fashion spectacles may not meet the Australian Standard.



### Be a good role model

- Demonstrate good sun protective behaviours and be a good role model for your child.
- Make sun protection part of your family's routine and help your children to develop good sun protection habits early in life.