



## Child and Adolescent Health Specialists, PC

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### FUN IN THE SUN

Most of our sun exposure (between 60 to 80 percent) occurs before we turn 18 years of age. That's because children spend more time outdoors than most adults, especially in the summer.

Research has shown that two or more blistering sunburns as a child or adolescent increase the risk of developing skin cancer as an adult. It is very important, therefore, to protect babies and children from sunburn. Do this by making sun protection a family event. Parents can be the best teachers by practicing sun protection themselves and teaching all family members to protect their skin.

It's up to parents to protect their children's skin. Sunburns hurt. Sunburns can also cause dehydration and fever. Too many sunburns and too much sun exposure over the years can cause not only skin cancer, but also wrinkles and possibly cataracts.

Babies under 6 months of age need extra protection from the sun because they have sensitive skin that is thinner than adults. This causes them to sunburn more easily than adults.

For infants less than 6 months old:

- Babies younger than 6 months of age should be kept out of the direct sunlight. Keep your baby in the shade, under an umbrella, or under a stroller canopy.
- Avoiding sun exposure and dressing infants in lightweight long pants, long-sleeved shirts, and brimmed hats are still the top recommendations from the American Academy of Pediatrics to prevent sunburn. However, when adequate clothing and shade are not available, sunscreen can be applied. Before covering with sunscreen, be sure to apply a small amount to a limited area and watch for any reactions.
- If your baby gets a sunburn, contact your pediatrician at once. A severe sunburn is an emergency.

For children older than 1 year old and all family members:

- The first, and best, line of defense against the sun is covering up. Wear a hat with a three-inch brim or a bill facing forward, sunglasses (look for sunglasses that block 99-100% of ultraviolet rays), and cotton clothing with a tight weave. (The less light that shines through the fabric when held up to a lamp or window, the tighter the weave.)
- Stay in the shade whenever possible, and avoid sun exposure during the peak intensity hours - between 10 am and 4 pm.
- Choose a sunscreen with "broad-spectrum" on the label - this will screen out both ultraviolet A (UVA) and ultraviolet B (UVB) rays. Use a water-resistant or waterproof sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 15 or greater. Be sure to apply enough sunscreen - about one ounce per sitting for a young adult. Apply sunscreen at least 30 minutes before going outside, and use sunscreen even on cloudy days.
- Reapply sunscreen every two hours, or after swimming or sweating.