

Fun in the Sun

Warm, sunny days are wonderful—the sun feels so good on your skin. But what feels good can be very bad for you, your family and especially your baby. Before you take your baby to the park, beach or even out into the backyard, please read this brochure. It will help you learn how to protect your entire family and develop safe sun habits that can last a lifetime.

The sun and skin cancer

The sun provides energy to all living things on earth, but it can also harm us. Its ultraviolet (UV) rays can cause sunburn and skin cancer. The sun is the main cause of skin cancer, the most common form of cancer in the United States. Skin cancer can and does occur in children and young adults, but most of the people who get skin cancer are older. Older people get skin cancer because they have already received too much of the sun's damaging rays. **Your skin remembers each sunburn and each suntan year after year.**

All skin cancers are harmful and some, especially malignant ones, can be deadly if left untreated. Malignant melanoma is the most common form of cancer in women 25 to 30 years of age and is the second only to breast cancer in women 30 to 35 years of age. **Sun exposure in early childhood and adolescence contributes to skin cancer.**

The sun and the baby's skin

Your baby's skin is very delicate and it's up to you to protect it. Sunburns hurt. Sunburns can also cause fever and dehydration. Too many sunburns and too much exposure over the years can cause not only skin cancer, but also wrinkles and possibly cataracts of the eyes.

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

The dangers of sunburns

Research has shown that two or more blistering sunburns as a child or teen increase the risk of developing skin cancer later in life. Therefore it is very important to protect the babies and children from sunburn.

- A baby's sensitive skin is thinner than adult skin and a baby will sunburn more easily than an adult. Even babies with naturally darker skin need protection.
- It's up to you to protect your baby. A baby can't tell you when he/she is too hot or beginning to sunburn. Your baby can't move out of the sun and into the shade without your help.

Protecting your baby

Follow these simple rules to protect your baby from sunburns and skin cancer later in life:

- Babies under 6 months of age should be kept out of the direct sunlight. Move your baby to the shade or under a tree, umbrella or stroller canopy.

- Dress your baby in clothing that covers the body, such as comfortable lightweight long pants, long sleeved shirts and hats with brims that shade the face and cover the ears.
- Select clothes made of tightly woven fabrics. Clothes that have a tighter weave—the way a fabric is constructed—generally protect better than clothes with a broader weave. Clothing made of cotton is both cool and protective.
- When using a cap with a bill, make sure the bill is facing forward to shield the baby's face. Child size sunglasses with UV protection are also a good idea for protecting your child's eyes.

Remember these facts about the sun's rays

- The sun's rays are the strongest between 10 am and 4 p.m. Try to keep your baby out of the sun during these hours.
- The sun's damaging UV rays can bounce back from sand, snow or concrete; so be particularly careful in these areas.
- Most of the sun's rays can come through the clouds on an overcast day; so use sun protection even on cloudy days.

Sunscreen for your baby

- Choose a sunscreen made for children.
- Test the sunscreen on your baby's wrist for a reaction before applying sunscreen all over.
- Apply carefully around the eyes, avoiding the eyelids. If your baby cries or complains that the sunscreen burns his/her eyes, try a different brand or try a sunscreen stick or sun-block with titanium dioxide or zinc oxide. If a rash develops ask us for another suggestion.
- When choosing a sunscreen, look for the words "broad spectrum" on the label—it means that the sunscreen will screen out both ultraviolet B (UVB) and ultraviolet A (UVA) rays.
- The sun protection factor (SPF) should be at least 15.
- Use enough sunscreen, making sure to cover all exposed areas, especially your baby's face, nose, ears, feet and hands.
- Put it 30 minutes before going outdoors. The sun needs time to work on the skin.
- Choose a water resistant or waterproof sunscreen.
- Sunscreens that are "waterproof" should be reapplied every two hours, especially if your baby is playing in the water.
- Zinc oxide, a very effective sun-block can be used as extra protection on the nose, cheeks, top of the ears and on the shoulders.
- Remember that sunscreens should be used for sun protection and not as a reason to stay in the sun longer.

Sunburn can be dangerous

If your baby gets a sunburn and is under 1 years of age contact us at once—a severe sunburn is an emergency. For babies over the age of one year, tell us if there is blistering, pain or fever.

- Avoid sunburns—they can be very dangerous to a baby.
- If your baby gets a sunburn, give your baby juice or water to replace the lost fluids.
- Cool water soaks may help your baby's skin feel better.
- Do not use any medicated lotions on your baby's skin unless we recommend it.
- Keep your baby completely out of the sun until the sunburn is totally healed.

Set a good example

Make sun protection a regular family event. Your baby needs you for protection from the sunburns. Since babies learn by imitation, you can be the best teacher by practicing sun protection yourself. Teach your family how to protect your skin.

