



## Your Kids and the Sun

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After a long, cold winter, we all look forward to being outdoors with the sun's rays warming our skin, but before your kids hit the beach or park or even your own backyard, remember that too much sun can cause irreparable damage to their skin. By following our 'Eight Simple Steps for Sun Protection', you can prevent painful sunburns during the summer and significantly reduce your children's risk of developing skin cancer when they become adults. It's so easy to protect your family from the sun!



## A Growing Health Problem



The (Ultraviolet) UV rays from the sun are the main cause of skin cancer. Thanks to our customary love of a suntan and our outdoor-orientated lifestyles, skin cancer has become a significant and growing health concern in Canada, with more than 50,000 new cases of this disease expected each year. Our kids now face a one-in-seven risk of getting skin cancer during their lifetime.

### How does the sun harm our skin?



Although the sun emits various types of radiation, it is the ultraviolet rays, which most affects our skin. Ultraviolet rays damage the skin's DNA and cell function, and from a child's first sunburn or suntan, the damage just keeps on adding up, resulting in wrinkles, dark and unsightly blotches, leathery skin, and possibly skin cancer years later.

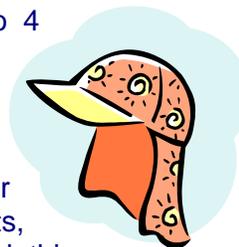
### Some Skin Cancers Can Be Deadly

Most skin cancers can, if left for a long time, cause disfigurement, and pain but are rarely fatal. However, melanoma, a less common but potentially deadly form of skin cancer, is responsible for more than 500 deaths in Canada this year. A worrying trend is that the incidence of melanoma is increasing at a very high rate and is in fact doubling every 15 years.

## EIGHT SIMPLE STEPS TO SUN PROTECTION

- 1) Keep children out of the sun between the peak hours of 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

- 2) It is not always possible to stay out of the sun, so use wide-brimmed or legionnaire-style sun-hats, as well as light coloured clothing, for sun protection. A closely woven material will shield the skin best. Comfortable long shirts and long pants will cover most of the body.



- 3) Wear sunglasses that provide **UVA** and **UVB** protection.

- 4) Children over the age of 6 months can wear a sunscreen. Apply a broad-spectrum, minimum SPF 15 sunscreen to all exposed areas of skin (20 minutes before you go out and reapply 20 minutes after being out in the sun to ensure an even application of the product and better application.) Don't forget their lips, ears and nose. These parts of their bodies burn easily (see 'Choosing a Sun Screen' for more details).



- 5) Be mindful of reflective light. 85% of the sun's harmful ultraviolet B rays can bounce back at you from sand, snow, concrete, and water, doubling the dosage of UV radiation.



## Sun Protection for Children is a Must



Most of us do not realize just how long children are out in the sun, and the more sun we get, the more likely we are to develop skin cancers. During the long summer holidays, while adults might be at the office or indoors at home, kids are outside for hours on end. Most of our lifetime sun exposure occurs before the age of 18. It is especially important to avoid sunburns during childhood since the development of melanoma has been medically linked to severe sunburns at a young age.

- 6) Kids can get a sunburn on a cloudy, overcast day. Up to 80% of the sun's rays can penetrate light clouds, mist, and fog.



- 7) Create a sun-safe environment for your children by providing more shade-like trees in your backyard and front yard. Plan your kids' play area in a shady spot under a tree or partial roof, awning or gazebo.
- 8) Make sun protection a habit and set a good example. Teach your children about sun protection so that they become aware of the dangers and can start taking precautions that will become lifelong, healthy habits.

## Kids at High Risk

Although no one is immune to skin cancer, some kids face a higher risk in getting this disease later on in life. Children with fair skin, who usually burn and never tan when out in the sun, or kids with blonde or red hair, freckles or many moles, are at greater risk.



## Suncare for Babies

- Babies have delicate and sensitive skin that can be easily injured by the sun because the outermost layer of their skin is thinner.
- Babies are not born with a developed skin protection system, so they burn more easily. Even children born to parents with deeply pigmented (dark) skin require maximum protection.

## What is an SPF?

The SPF or Sun Protection Factor of a sunscreen refers to the protection offered against the sun's ultraviolet B rays, known to cause both sunburn and skin cancer. The SPF of a product relates to the time it would take for your skin to burn when wearing a sunscreen compared to the time it would take for your skin to burn without any protection. In theory, you could stay



➡ A young child has more skin, relative to his body mass, than an adult, so sunburns can be very serious.

➡ A baby can't tell you whether they are too hot or the sun is too bright. Your baby may begin to cry and you won't know whether she's tired, hungry or hot.



➡ If a baby is uncomfortable they can't physically move themselves out of the sunlight. A six-month old on a blanket is less mobile than a one-year old who can toddle into the shade.

➡ Too much sun can be harmful. You and your baby or child can sunburn in only 15 minutes depending on the UV index value. If the UV index is low (from 0-2), the risk of getting too much sun is low, and no protection is required. If the UV index is between 3 and 7, you need protection. A UV index higher than 8 calls for extra protection. If you travel to the tropics, the index could be higher than 10.



➡ **NEVER** use baby oil to protect children from the sun. It will **NOT** protect them.

out in the sun fifteen times longer without burning your skin if you used a SPF 15 sunscreen. In practice, people often do not use enough of the sunscreen or don't reapply it and its effectiveness is therefore limited. Bearing in mind how people use sunscreens and the products ability to screen out ultraviolet rays, sun screens with a SPF of 15 or higher are recommended. Most sunscreens are now labelled 'broad-spectrum' and that means they offer protection against a wider range of the sun's rays, including part of the ultraviolet A rays. Recent research suggests that ultraviolet A rays contribute to skin aging, wrinkling, and probably the development of skin cancer.

## The Shadow Test

You can get young children involved in sun protection by showing them how to do the shadow test. It is important to stay in the shade when the sun is directly overhead and its rays are strongest. Considering your children may not be able to tell the time, please teach them following rule: if a person's shadow is shorter than your child's shadow then it is time to come in or get under some shade. When a person's shadow is longer than your child's shadow, it is safe to go out and play.



## Protecting Your Baby's Skin

Keep babies under 1 year of age out of direct sunlight, either in a covered stroller, under an umbrella or in the shade. This will not only protect their skin against sun damage but will also prevent dehydration or

## Summer Camp Tips

When you are packing backpacks for summer camp, don't forget to put in a hat, protective clothing, and a SPF 15 or higher sunscreen. Remind your kids to



sunstroke. Shield their skin with hats and loose fitting clothing. Closely knit fabrics block out most of the sun's rays. Long sleeved shirts and long pants will cover up most of their body. **It is recommended that you do not use sunscreens on babies under 6 months of age.**

your kids to stay in the shade as much as possible on outdoor trips. This will not only protect their skin but also keep them cool and help them to avoid dehydration.

## Choosing a Sun Screen

Dermatologists advise using broad spectrum, SPF 15 or higher sunscreens to screen out as much as possible of the sun's ultraviolet rays. Look for the **'Canadian Dermatology Association'** logo on sunscreen products to be on the safe side. Choose a milky lotion for young children. Sunscreens containing alcohol may burn or sting a child's skin and eyes. Use waterproof products for swimmers and beach goers. Waterproof sunscreens are formulated to stay on the skin even if you enter the water for up to 80 minutes. Apply a SPF 15 lip balm to the lips.

**Sunscreens are not intended to increase sun exposure time. They are meant to increase protection during unavoidable exposure.**

## Applying Sun Screens

Children over the age of six months can wear a sunscreen. Always test a small amount of sunscreen on your child's inner forearm. Do not wash this area for two days and then check to see if there are any signs of an adverse reaction.



## Treating a Sunburn

For babies under one year of age, a sunburn should be treated as an emergency. Call your family doctor. If a child is one year or older and has a sunburn with severe pain, headache, blistering, lethargy or fever, call your doctor. To treat a mild sunburn:

- Give your child plenty of fluids
- Acetaminophen may be given for pain
- Cold compresses can be applied to the red area
- A mild cold cream or hydrocortisone 1/2% may also be used.

## When on Medication

If your children are on medication, check with your doctor before allowing them into the sun. Certain medications can make your child's skin more sensitive to UV rays and cause adverse reactions such as a rash, redness, or swelling, can be a side effect of various drugs. Consult your paediatrician if you have any questions about your medication.



Remember to apply a sunscreen at least 20 minutes before your kids go outside. Use generous amounts of the product and do not forget the ears, nose, tops of the feet and backs of the knees. Apply carefully around the eyes. Reapply the sunscreen frequently and liberally. **A word of caution:** No sunscreen offers complete protection from the sun's rays. Try to limit the amount of time your family spends out in the sun, especially during the peak hours of 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

## The UV Index and Science of Sun Protection

Environment Canada UV Index is a measure of the intensity of the sun's burning UV rays. The daily UV Index is a prediction of the maximum UV strength for the day in your area. It is available on your local TV and radio stations, the Weather Network, etc. The 'time to burn' reading refers to the minimum time required for a person with a pale-complexion to incur skin damage from the sun's UV-B rays. Find the [current UV index in your area](#) and use the following table to determine your recommended sun protection actions:

UV Index	Sun Protection Actions
<b>0 - 2</b> <b>Low</b>	Minimal sun protection required. If outside for more than one hour, wear sunglasses and sunscreen. Reflections can nearly double UV strength, especially in the winter with freshly fallen snow.
<b>3 - 5</b> <b>Moderate</b>	Take precautions. Cover up, wear a hat, sunglasses and sunscreen if outside for 30 minutes or more. Look for shade near midday.
<b>6 - 7</b> <b>High</b>	Protection required. UV damages skin and can cause sunburn. Reduce time in the sun between 11 a.m. and 4 p.m. Seek shade, cover up, and wear a hat, sunglasses, and sunscreen.
<b>8 - 10</b> <b>Very high</b>	Extra protection required. Unprotected skin can be damaged and burn quickly. Avoid the sun between 11 a.m. and 4 p.m. Seek shade, cover up, and wear a hat, sunglasses, and sunscreen.
<b>11+</b> <b>Extreme</b>	Maximum protection required. Unprotected skin will be damaged and burn in minutes. Avoid the sun between 11 a.m. and 4 p.m. Remain in the shade, cover up, and wear a hat, sunglasses, and sunscreen.

Before you go outside, watch this [video](#) and take the sun safety motto with you: cap it, shade it, drink it and screen it.

Some of the information above was resourced from Health Canada.

Should you wish to obtain more information from this government website, please click on ['Your Kids and the Sun'](#).



**Health Canada** in collaboration with **Environment Canada** have created a program called  
'The UV Index Sun Awareness Program',

was specifically designed to teach Canadian children about the harmful effects of overexposure to solar ultraviolet radiation and how to use the UV Index. As well as reading valuable information on sun safety, also included are educational guidelines, games and quizzes for teachers and daycare providers. Please click on the link above to view this wonderful program.