



protect young skin from the sun!

by Monica Hamburg, MD

Protecting your child's skin from the harmful rays of the sun is so important because most skin cancer later in life is caused by sun exposure as a child. More than 2 million skin cancers are diagnosed every year, and the more sun exposure your child gets, the higher the risk of cancer. Remember, everyone needs sunscreen, no matter how pigmented your skin! Be aware that you actually need sunscreen year-round, not just in the summer (especially skiers)!

WHICH SUNSCREEN IS BEST FOR MY CHILD?

Always choose a sunscreen that says "Broad-spectrum" protection (protects from *UVA* and *UVB* rays) on the bottle. Both types of rays cause skin cancer. You should always use *SPF 30* or higher, and consider *SPF 50* or higher for infants and toddlers. Buy water resistant sunscreen so that you're protected in the water, but still reapply after swimming! Remember to check the expiration date. Toss the bottle once it's 2 years old. Don't store sunscreen in a hot car as it may degrade faster and stop working.

WHAT ABOUT MY BABY?

Ideally babies should avoid **all** sun exposure. Keep babies in the shade and keep them in long sleeves and pants, wide-brimmed hat and sunglasses, but make sure they do not get overheated and are drinking plenty of fluids. A baby's skin is much more sensitive than an older child's and sunscreen should not be applied until they are at least 6 months of age. Sunscreens that contain zinc oxide or titanium dioxide tend to be less irritating to very young skin.

HOW TO APPLY SUNSCREEN:

Generously apply sunscreen to dry skin 15 minutes before heading out and cover all sun exposed areas (those not covered by clothes). Don't forget ears, hands and feet! Lips can also get skin cancer so apply lipbalm that contains *SPF 30* or higher. It takes about one ounce (six teaspoons) of sunscreen to cover your body. Sprays may not be as effective as lotions or gels because it is hard to know if you covered all the sun-exposed parts sufficiently, and some of them have fumes that should not be inhaled. **Reapply every 2 hours no matter what SPF you are using** and reapply after swimming or sweating, even if your sunscreen is waterproof. Use sunscreen even on cloudy days as UV radiation still gets through the clouds!



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OTHER ways to PROTECT your CHILD from the sun:



No sunscreen can block 100% of the sun's rays. Even with the protection of sunscreen, you should avoid sun exposure during the times when the sun rays are strongest, 10 am to 2 pm; if your shadow is shorter than you, seek shade! Wear a wide-brimmed hat, sunglasses and protective clothing such as long-sleeved shirts and pants. Did you know that water reflects sun rays and makes them even stronger (as does sand and snow)? Everyone should avoid tanning beds which expose you to dangerous UV rays too. Remember to check your child's skin and consider seeing a dermatologist if you see any growing/changing moles.



WHAT if my CHILD gets a sunburn?



Treat a sunburn as soon as you see it. First, get the child out of the sun! Try a cool bath, an unscented moisturizer to cool the skin, and have them drink extra water. If you see blisters, this is a second-degree burn. Allow the blisters to heal untouched, do not pop a blister! It is there to prevent infection. If blisters cover a large area or there is fever, chills, or headache, your child needs to be seen immediately. Keep sunburned skin out of the sun completely until healed.

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