



## Sun-Safety

We all need some sun exposure; it's our primary source of vitamin D, which helps us absorb calcium for stronger, healthier bones. But it doesn't take much time in the sun for most people to get the vitamin D they need, and repeated unprotected exposure to the sun's ultraviolet rays can cause skin damage, eye damage, immune system suppression, and skin cancer. Even people in their twenties can develop skin cancer.

Most kids rack up between 50% and 80% of their lifetime sun exposure before age 18, so it's important that parents teach their children how to enjoy fun in the sun safely. With the right precautions, you can greatly reduce your child's chance of developing skin cancer.

## Sunburn

Sunburn can happen within 15 minutes of being in the sun, but the redness and discomfort may not be noticed for a few hours. Repeated sunburns can lead to skin cancer. Unprotected sun exposure is even more dangerous for kids who have many moles or freckles, very fair skin and hair, or a family history of skin cancer.



### Signs and Symptoms

#### Mild

- skin redness and warmth
- pain
- itchiness

#### Severe:

- skin redness and blistering
- pain and tingling
- swelling
- headache
- nausea
- fever and chills
- dizziness



### What to Do:

- Remove the child from the sun right away.
- Place the child in a cool (not cold) shower or bath – or apply cool compresses as often as needed.
- Give extra fluids for the next 2 to 3 days.
- Give the child ibuprofen or acetaminophen as directed, if needed, to relieve pain.
- Use moisturizing creams or aloe gel to provide comfort.
- When going outside, all sunburned areas should be fully covered to protect the child from the sun until healed.

#### Seek Emergency Medical Care if:

- a sunburn forms blisters or is extremely painful
- a child has facial swelling from a sunburn
- a sunburn covers a large area
- a child has fever or chills after getting sunburned
- a child has headache, confusion, or a feeling of faintness
- you see signs of dehydration (increased thirst or dry eyes and mouth)



### Think Prevention!

- Minimize kids' summer sun exposure between 10 AM and 4 PM.
- Have kids wear protective clothing, sunglasses, and a hat.
- Apply sunscreen that provides UVB and UVA protection with a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 15.
- Apply sunscreen 15 to 30 minutes **before sun exposure** and 30 minutes after exposure begins, then reapply after kids have been swimming or sweating.

### How to Be Safe When You're in the Sun



You don't need to hide from the sun completely or wrap up like a mummy to protect yourself. But you should take the following steps:

1. Take frequent breaks from the sun by going indoors or moving into the shade.
2. Always wear sunscreen.
3. Use a sunscreen with an SPF rating of 30 or higher. Put on sunscreen 15 to 20 minutes before going out in the sun. The letters SPF stand for sun protection factor, and the number rating tells you how much longer you can stay in the

sun without getting sunburned. But this isn't always true, so reapply sunscreen at least every 2 hours, just to be safe. Do this more often if you've been swimming or sweating a lot — even if the sunscreen is waterproof. And remember that you can get sunburned more quickly when you're swimming or boating because the reflection from the water intensifies the sun's rays.

4. Be sure to put sunscreen all over your body. This includes some places you might not think of, like the tops of your ears, the back of your neck, the part in your hair, your face, and the tops of your feet. You may need some help reaching the back of your body so ask your parents or friends to give you a hand. If you want to block the sun's rays, wear clothing that you can't see your hand through. You may still get burned through more sheer fabrics. Wear a baseball cap or other fun hat to block your face from the sun.
5. Don't forget that your eyes need protection from ultraviolet rays, too. Always wear sunglasses in the bright sun, and make sure they have a label saying that they block UV rays.



## Kids Reading

Even though the sun is hot, it does cool things. It keeps us warm. It makes flowers and plants grow. It even gives us vitamin D so we can better absorb calcium into our bodies for strong bones.

It is possible to get too much sun. If your skin's been exposed to too much sun, you get what's known as a sunburn.

Some people get a sunburn faster than others because of their coloring. If you have blond or red hair, light-colored skin, and light-colored eyes, you'll tend to get a sunburn more quickly than someone with dark eyes and skin. That's because you have less melanin (say: **meh**-luh-nun). Melanin is a chemical in the skin that protects it from sun damage by reflecting and absorbing UV rays. People with darker skin have more melanin, but even if you have dark hair, dark eyes, or darker-toned skin, you can still get a sunburn. It will just take a little bit longer.

Sunburns look bad and feel worse. They can cause blisters on your skin. They can keep you inside feeling sore when everyone else is outside having fun. They increase your chance of getting wrinkly when you get older. And worst of all, they can lead to skin cancer when you are an adult. Because getting wrinkles and getting sick don't happen right away, they can seem like things that could never happen to you. But you still need to be careful.

## **Drink Up!**

Drinking water is an important part of staying healthy, especially when it's hot outside. When you're sweating, you lose water that your body needs to work properly. And if you're playing a sport or running around in the sun, you lose even more water, because you sweat that much more.



So drink up and don't wait until you're thirsty — drinking before you feel thirsty helps keep the water level in your body from dropping too low (dehydration) when it's hot or you're sweating a lot with exercise. If you forget and suddenly feel thirsty, start drinking then. There are lots of cool-looking water bottles around, so get one you really like, fill it up, and drink up!

## **Got That Hot Feeling?**

If you're out in the hot sun or you're exercising on a hot day, it's easy to get **heat exhaustion**.

Kids get heat exhaustion when their bodies can't cool themselves fast enough. A kid with heat exhaustion might feel overheated, tired, and weak. Heat exhaustion can come on suddenly. A person may just collapse when playing soccer or tennis, for example. It can leave someone feeling really tired for days after it happens. **Heat stroke** is a more serious heat-



related illness and can cause someone to stop sweating; to have red, hot skin; and to have a high temperature. The person might become uncoordinated, confused, or even lose consciousness. It requires emergency medical attention.

Be sure to tell an adult if you're hot and you have a headache or feel dizzy or nauseated (like you're going to throw up). The grown-up will want to get you out of the sun, give you liquids to drink, and take you to a doctor, if necessary.

The good news is that the sun doesn't have to be your enemy if you wear your sunscreen, drink your water, and take breaks when you start to feel too hot. And don't forget your sunglasses. Not only do they protect your eyes from the sun, they make you look so cool!

## Heat Illness

Heat exhaustion starts slowly and if not quickly treated can progress to heatstroke. In heatstroke, a child's temperature reaches 105° F (40.5° C) or higher. Heatstroke requires **immediate emergency medical care** and can be fatal.



### Signs and Symptoms

#### Of heat exhaustion:

- increased thirst
- weakness
- fainting
- muscle cramps
- nausea and vomiting
- irritability
- headache
- increased sweating
- cool, clammy skin
- elevation of body temperature to less than 105° F (40.5° C)

#### Of heatstroke:

- severe headache
- weakness, dizziness
- confusion
- rapid breathing and heartbeat
- loss of consciousness leading to coma
- seizures
- may not be sweating
- flushed, hot, dry skin
- elevation of body temperature to 105° F (40.5° C) or higher



### What to Do:

For a child with symptoms of heatstroke, **seek emergency medical care immediately**. In cases of heat exhaustion or while awaiting help for a child with possible heatstroke:

- Bring the child indoors or into the shade immediately.
- Undress the child.
- Have the child lie down; elevate feet slightly.
- If the child is alert, place in cool bath water. If outside, spray the child with mist from a garden hose.
- If the child is alert and coherent, give frequent sips of cool, clear fluids.
- If the child is vomiting, turn onto his or her side to prevent choking.



### Think Prevention!

- Teach kids to always drink plenty of fluids before and during any activity in hot, sunny weather – even if they aren't thirsty.
- Make sure kids wear light-colored, loose clothing.
- Do not have your child participate in heavy activity outdoors during the hottest hours of the day.
- Teach kids to come indoors immediately whenever they feel overheated.