

Sun Smart information for Parentzone

Skin cancer is one of the most common cancers in the UK and the number of cases is rising at an alarming rate, however, the majority of these cases could be prevented. Most skin cancers are caused by UV radiation from the sun. If we protect ourselves from the sun then we can reduce our risk. This is particularly important for children whose skin is more delicate and easily damaged.

Studies have found that sunburn during childhood can increase the risk of skin cancer later on in life. This is why it is important to ensure that children stay safe in the sun.

Ten tips for protecting children in the sun

- **Set good habits for the future** Teaching children safe sun habits while they are young sets a good pattern for later life.
- **Remember you can burn in the UK** The Great British sun is quite capable of burning your child! Take extra care at home as well as abroad.
- **Use shade** Keep babies in complete shade: under trees, umbrellas, canopies or indoors. Provide shade for prams and buggies, if possible.
- **Cover them up** When outdoors, protect a baby's skin with loose-fitting clothes, and a wide-brimmed hat that shades their face, neck and ears.
- **Wear sunglasses** Buy good quality, wraparound sunglasses for children, as soon as they can wear them. Sunglasses don't have to be expensive brands.
- **Find hats they like** Encourage children to wear hats with brims, especially if they are not wearing sunglasses. The wider the brim, the more skin will be shaded from the sun.
- **Use sunscreen wisely** Use at least a factor 15 sunscreen and choose a "broad-spectrum" brand that has a four or five-star rating. Apply to areas that cannot be protected by clothing, such as the face, ears, feet and backs of hands. Choose sunscreens that are formulated for children and babies' skin. These products are less likely to contain alcohol or fragrances that might irritate the skin and cause allergic reactions.
- **Apply sunscreen generously and regularly.** Put some on before children go outdoors. Sunscreen can easily be washed, rubbed or sweated off – so reapply often throughout the day.
- **Don't forget school times** Remember play times and lunch breaks on summer school days too. Give children a hat to wear and, if they can't apply sunscreen at school, cover their exposed skin before they go.

For more information about skin cancer and sun protection, access the Sun Smart website at www.sunsmart.org.uk.