

Sun Safety for Young Children

Sun Facts

- Most sun damage happens in early childhood. Children spend more time outside than adults, putting them more at risk of sun damage.
- Being exposed to the sun's harmful rays over and over again can damage your child's skin and eyes. Getting 1 bad sunburn as a child doubles the risk of getting skin cancer. A suntan is actually a sign of sun damage.
- Skin cancer is the most common type of cancer in Canada. It's also one of the easiest cancers to prevent.
- If your child has fair skin, blonde or red hair, freckles or a lot of moles, they're at higher risk of sun damage.

3 steps for sun safety

1. Cover up

- Everyone in the family, especially infants and children, should wear a wide-brimmed hat that shades the face, ears, and neck.
- Wear sunglasses with 100% ultraviolet radiation (UVR) protection.
- Put on loose-fitting clothing that covers the body, arms, and legs. Closely woven fabrics or clothing with SPF (sun protection factor) are the best. Cover as much skin as possible with clothing. Change your child into dry clothing after playing in the water. Wet clothing doesn't provide as much UVR protection.
- Keep strollers, infant carriers, and playpens covered (try a golf umbrella or light blanket) or in the shade. Check baby often to make sure they don't get too hot.

2. Seek shade

- Baby skin is extra sensitive to the sun. Keep your baby out of direct sunlight as much as possible.
- When the sun's rays are strongest, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., plan to be inside or in the shade. Do outdoor activities in the early morning, late afternoon, and evening.
- Teach your child what shade is. Encourage them to find a shady place to take breaks when they're outside (e.g., under a tree, in the shadow of a building).

3. Use sunscreen

Using sunscreen on babies younger than 6 months is not recommended.

For infants 6 to 12 months old, check with your health care provider before using sunscreen.

All children over 12 months of age need to use sunscreen.

- Use a sunscreen labelled “broad-spectrum” with SPF 30 or higher on everyone in the family. If your child is playing in or near water, use water-resistant sunscreen.
- Test a small amount on your baby’s inner arm to make sure they don’t react to it.
- Check to be sure the sunscreen hasn’t expired.
- Put sunscreen on clean, dry skin. Use enough sunscreen to cover your child’s whole body and rub it in. Spray-on sunscreen needs to be rubbed into the skin to work correctly.
 - **The most common mistake is not putting on enough sunscreen.** You need at least 1 to 2 tablespoons for a child.
 - Put sunscreen on under clothing—a white T-shirt has an SPF of 7, so the sun can still damage skin that’s covered up. Don’t forget the back of neck and feet.
 - Put sunscreen on 20 minutes before going outside. Put it on again every 2 hours, **and** after swimming or exercising.
- Don’t put sunscreen under your child’s eyes or on their hands.
- Use an SPF 30 lip balm on your child’s lips.
- Wash sunscreen off baby’s skin when you come inside.
- Leave sunscreen at daycare or with the camp supervisor. Give signed permission for staff to put sunscreen on your child.
- Check the Canadian Dermatology Association (CDA) website for sunscreens they recommend. Look for the CDA logo on your sunscreen.

Check the UV index every day

The UV Index measures how strong the sun will be for that day.

0-2 low risk: Anyone outside for more than 1 hour should be wearing sunscreen, sunglasses, and appropriate clothing.

3-5 moderate risk: Take precautions, such as finding shade and wearing a hat, sunglasses, and proper clothing. Limit exposure between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m. Wear SPF 30 sunscreen and put it on every 2 hours.

6+ high risk: Burns and skin damage happen quickly. Consider staying inside from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Use SPF 30 or higher sunscreen and put it on every 2 hours. Cover as much skin as possible with clothing and a hat. Stay in shade as much as possible. Keep infants out of the sun when the UV Index is high