

Sunscreen and Sun Protection

Sun protection is important for people of all ages and skin tones. It helps reduce the risk of damaging effects from sun exposure, like skin cancer, skin aging, and dark spots. Protecting your child's skin from too much sun can reduce the risk of these effects.

Children that get sunburnt are at a higher risk of getting skin cancer later in life. A sunburn is a sign of skin damage that you can see, but there is also damage you can't see. This can happen with all skin types.

There are different types of sun rays that can harm the skin:

- UVA rays – Cause skin aging and skin cancer.
- UVB rays – Cause sunburns and skin cancer.
- Visible light (VL) – These rays can get deeper in the skin. They cause redness and dark spots, especially in people with skin of color.

Sunscreen

- Everyone should wear sunscreen. Make sure your sunscreen has these on the label:
 - **Broad spectrum** – Protects against UVA and UVB sunrays.
 - **Water-resistant** – Water-resistant for up to 40 to 80 minutes. Sunscreens are not waterproof.
 - **Sun protection factor (SPF) of 30 or higher**
- Mineral sunscreen is recommended for babies over 6 months old, young children, and people with sensitive skin. These sunscreens contain either **titanium dioxide** or **zinc oxide**. Check your sunscreen for these.
- Tinted sunscreens can be used to protect from UVA, UVB, and VL. These are best for people with skin of color.

How to Apply Sunscreen

- Apply to all skin that is showing (exposed) at least 15 to 30 minutes before going outside.
- Put more sunscreen on (reapply) every 2 hours **and** after getting the skin wet, like when swimming or sweating.
- Reapply sunscreen when outside in all types of weather, both sunny and cloudy. Sun rays come through clouds and can damage your skin.
- Check the expiration date on your sunscreen. If it has changed in color or feeling (texture), throw it away and get new sunscreen.

Protecting Your Skin

Sunscreen is not the only way to protect your skin from the sun. You can also:

- Wear hats, sunglasses, and other sun-protective clothing like lightweight long-sleeved shirts and pants. Do this, especially when close to water, sand, and snow. Sun rays will reflect off these and may cause more skin damage.
- Stay in the shade.
- Avoid being outside between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. when the sun's rays are the strongest.
- Get vitamin D safely through a healthy diet. Ask your doctor or health care provider if you have questions about ways to get vitamin D.
- Check your child's skin often. Look all over their skin for new moles or anything that's different. Talk to their doctor or health care provider about any changes you see.
- Avoid using tanning beds.
- Use sun-protective clothing on infants less than 6 months old and keep them in the shade. Avoid sunscreen on their skin.

Treatment

If your child has a sunburn:

- Have them take cool baths or showers. Apply aloe vera or soy lotion to painful areas.
- Give them acetaminophen (Tylenol®) or ibuprofen (Advil® or Motrin®) for pain and swelling **if they're over 6 months old**.
- Give them extra water to drink. Damaged skin loses water.
- Do not pop any blisters they have.