



Sun Safety in the Child Care Setting

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Babies and young children are more susceptible to sunburn because their skin contains less melanin (dark brown/black pigment). Just one blistering sunburn as a child or more than five serious sunburns in a person's lifetime can more than double the risk of developing skin cancer. The following guidelines provide ways to reduce children's exposure to harmful sun exposure and outline the age-appropriate use of sunscreen.

Scheduling time outdoors

- Sun rays are strongest between 10 am and 4 pm. Limit exposure between 11:00 am and 2:00 pm when possible.
- Remember that the sun's damaging UV rays can reflect off sand, snow, concrete, and water.
- Most of the sun's rays can come through the clouds, so use sunscreen even on cloudy days.
- If National Weather Services says the heat index is above 89 degrees F, it is too hot for the children to play outside. Find a cooler environment for children to engage in large motor activity.
- UV rays are damaging in all months of the year, regardless of season or outdoor temperature.

Sunscreen permissions and precautions

- **Sunscreen is not recommended for children under 6 months of age.** Children under the age of 6 months should be kept out of direct sunlight at all times. Written permission and instructions from a health care provider should be obtained if parents request sunscreen be used on a child under 6 months of age.
- Sunscreen is considered to be a non-prescription product. **Signed written parental permission is needed before applying sunscreen to a child.** See [Authorization for Non-Prescription Product Form](#)
- **Signed, written permission is needed if parents request sunscreen NOT BE used on a child who is over 6 months of age.** See [Parent Request for No Sunscreen Form](#)
- Use a sunscreen made for specifically for children, preferably one that is labeled "waterproof" with a SPF of 15 - 50. Products with SPF over 50 do not do more. It is also important to look for the words "broad-spectrum" on the label – which means it will block out both ultraviolet B (UVB) and ultraviolet A (UVA) rays.
- Do not store sunscreen products in extreme heat or within reach of children.
- Check the sunscreen's expiration date. Sunscreen should be discarded upon expiration or after 3 years if no date is printed on the product.

How to apply sunscreen

- Apply sunscreen 20-30 minutes before going outside to allow the ingredients to fully bind with the skin.
- Reapply sunscreen every 2 hours, especially if the child is sweating or playing in water.
- Spray sunscreens are not recommended due to the possibility of inhaling the product or getting it sprayed into the eyes. If spray sunscreen is used, it is safer to spray the product into your hands and then apply to the child. Do not spray aerosols in enclosed areas.
- Cover all exposed skin – especially ears, face, scalp (if child is bald), neck, and shoulders.
- Rub the sunscreen into the skin completely. Avoid getting sunscreen in child's eyes or mouth.
- If sunscreen and insect repellent both need to be applied, apply the sunscreen first, followed by the insect

repellent. Combination products containing sunscreen and DEET are not recommended to use.

- Supervise children who apply sunscreen by themselves to make sure all exposed areas are covered. Hands should be washed after applying sunscreen (hands can become slippery or child may rub sunscreen into eyes).

Reducing children's exposure to sun and heat

- Encourage hats for all children – especially infants.
- Encourage children to wear shatter resistant sunglasses with at least 99% UV protection.
- Children with darker colored skin and hair still need to use sunscreen and should wear a hat with a wide brim because darker colors absorb more heat from the sunlight.
- Children can be easily burned by contact with hot surfaces such as sand, asphalt, and playground equipment.
- In temperatures over 75 degrees, offer water every 15 minutes when outdoors. Water is better than juice, pop, or sport drinks (ex. Gatorade). Don't wait for children to ask for something to drink. Children should be encouraged to drink before they feel thirsty, because dehydration can occur before they feel thirsty. Children can become dehydrated very quickly; children need more water than adults because they use more energy.

Signs and treatment for over exposure to sun and heat

- If child is sunburned, give water to drink and apply cool washcloths to burned areas. Do not apply any medicated products unless recommended by a physician.
- A child with a blistering sunburn should be kept out of sun until skin is completely healed.
- Sunburns can cause dehydration and fever. If a child under 1 year of age gets a sunburn, it is recommended to contact the child's physician immediately. A severe sunburn is considered an emergency.
- **Signs of heat stroke** include hot, flushed skin; high fever (at least 105 degrees F); the absence of sweating; confusion or unconsciousness; and shock (low blood pressure). The onset is usually rapid.

First aid for heat stroke:

- Call 911.
 - Move child to cool place. Have child lie down and keep feet elevated.
 - Place ice packs in groin and armpits; sponge child with cool water; fan child.
 - If child is conscious, give as much cold water as child can tolerate.
- **Signs of heat exhaustion** include cold, pale skin; no fever (temperature less than 100 degrees F), profuse sweating, dizziness, fainting and weakness. The onset is usually gradual.

First aid for heat exhaustion:

- Call child's parents.
- Move child to a cool place; have child lie down and keep feet elevated.
- Cover child with cold wet towels; give as much cold water to drink as the child can tolerate.

Learn More About Sun Safety

More information and resources about sun safety are available on the North Dakota Cancer Coalition website at:

- www.ndcancercoalition.org/?id=86&page=Skin+Cancer+Awareness
- www.ewg.org

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