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SpotSkinCancer.org

Children and Skin Cancer



Skin cancer is the most common cancer in the United States, and it only takes one blistering sunburn during childhood or adolescence to nearly double a person's chance of developing melanoma, the deadliest form of skin cancer, later in life.

As a parent, you play a crucial role in protecting your children's skin from the sun's harmful ultraviolet rays, which can cause skin cancer. Teaching your children about the importance of sun protection can help them develop sun-safe habits that last a lifetime.

SUN PROTECTION TIPS FOR CHILDREN

UV exposure is the most preventable risk factor for skin cancer. Here are some tips to help you incorporate sun safety into your child's life:

Be generous with sunscreen:

- Apply sunscreen to your child's skin 15 minutes before sun exposure.
- Use a broad-spectrum, water-resistant sunscreen with an SPF of 30 or higher.
- Apply enough sunscreen to cover all exposed skin, including the ears, the tops of the feet and the part in your child's hair.
- Reapply your child's sunscreen approximately every two hours, even on cloudy days, and immediately after swimming or sweating.
- If using spray sunscreen, hold the nozzle close to your child's skin and spray generously to cover all exposed skin. Rub it in afterwards to ensure you didn't miss any spots. For your child's face, spray the sunscreen into your hands first, then apply it to your child's face.
- Set a good example by applying sunscreen to your skin as well.

Choose protective clothing:

- Whenever possible, dress your child in lightweight, long-sleeved shirts and pants, a wide-brimmed hat and sunglasses with UV protection.
- Most clothing absorbs or reflects some UV rays. However, light-colored and loose-knit fabrics as well as wet clothes that cling to the skin do not offer much sun protection. In general, the tighter the weave of the fabric and the darker the fabric color, the more UV protection clothing offers.

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To find a free SPOTme® skin cancer screening in your area, visit SpotSkinCancer.org or call 888-462-DERM (3376)

Limit time in the sun:

- The sun's rays are strongest between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. Try to schedule activities to avoid these peak hours.
- When your child is outdoors, remind them to look at their shadow. If their shadow appears to be shorter than they are, the sun's rays are strongest, and they should seek shade.
- Use extra caution near water, snow and sand because they reflect and intensify the damaging rays of the sun, which can increase the chance of sunburn.

SUN PROTECTION TIPS FOR BABIES

Sun protection is important at every stage of life, including infancy. Follow these tips to keep your baby safe from the sun:

Stay in the shade:

- Shade is the best way to shield your baby from the sun, especially if he or she is younger than 6 months old.
- If you can't find shade, create your own using an umbrella, canopy or the hood of a stroller.

Choose protective clothing:

- Dress your baby in lightweight long-sleeved shirts and pants.
- Make sure your baby wears a wide-brimmed hat and sunglasses with UV protection.

Consider sunscreen:

- Sunscreen use should be avoided if possible in babies younger than 6 months old. However, if shade and adequate clothing are not available, parents and caretakers can apply a minimal amount of sunscreen on children younger than 6 months.
- Choose a broad-spectrum, water-resistant sunscreen with an SPF of at least 30.
- Sunscreens containing titanium dioxide or zinc oxide are less likely to irritate a baby's sensitive skin.
- Reapply your child's sunscreen every two hours or immediately after swimming or sweating.

Be safe on hot days:

- Make sure your baby does not get overheated and drinks plenty of fluids.
- If your baby is fussy, crying excessively or has redness on any exposed skin, take him or her indoors immediately.

Whether you're enjoying a day together at the beach or watching your child participate in an outdoor sport, it's important to develop sun protection habits that will protect the whole family. If you have any questions about sun protection, talk to a board-certified dermatologist.

