



SUN SAFETY AT SCHOOL

DID YOU KNOW?

While some sun exposure can be enjoyable, too much is dangerous. Overexposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation in sunlight and indoor tanning devices can result in serious health effects, including skin cancer. Youth are particularly at risk of overexposure since a substantial amount of the average person's lifetime UV exposure occurs before the age of 18. Even one severe sunburn in childhood or adolescence can double the risk of developing skin cancer later in life.

Most people are not aware that skin cancer is the most common form of cancer in the United States. Parents, caregivers, schools, and the community have a responsibility to provide youth with sun safe environments and the knowledge and skills necessary to practice sun safe behaviors. Kids spend a great deal of time outdoors exposed to the sun's harmful rays during school-related events and activities such as sports, band practice, walking or biking to and from school, physical education class, recess, field trips, and other activities. Parents, caregivers, and school staff must serve as role models and schools should adopt policies and implement programs that promote sun safety and reduce risk of skin cancer. Nearly all skin cancer can be prevented through sun safe behaviors. By following a number of simple steps, everyone can enjoy time outdoors while being protected from overexposure to UV radiation.

SUN SAFE BEHAVIORS

- **SLIP ON A SHIRT.** A long-sleeve shirt is your best protection. If you choose a short-sleeve shirt, be sure to apply sunscreen on the areas of skin that are exposed.
- **SLOP ON SUNSCREEN.** Use sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 15 or more. To be effective, sunscreen needs to be generously applied 30 minutes before sun exposure and reapplied every two hours and after swimming or sweating.
- **SLAP ON A HAT.** The head and neck are common places for skin cancer to appear. For maximum protection, a three to four inch wide-brimmed hat should be worn. Be sure to apply sunscreen to the ears and neck if a smaller hat is worn.
- **WRAP ON SUNGLASSES.** Sunglasses protect the eyes and the skin around the eyes. Choose sunglasses that block 100% of both UVA and UVB rays.
- **SEEK SHADE.** Because the sun's UV rays are most intense between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., outdoor activities should be minimized during this time. Otherwise, find some shade and keep cool under a tree, umbrella, or structure.
- **SAY NO TO ARTIFICIAL RAYS.** Avoid indoor tanning beds, booths, and sunlamps. Like the sun, these are also sources of harmful UV radiation. Indoor tanning devices that emit UV radiation are not safe!

RISK FACTORS

Everyone should practice sun safe behaviors, but some people have a greater chance of developing skin cancer if they have one or more of the following risk factors:

- Spend a lot of time outdoors
- Light skin color, hair color, or eye color
- Family history of skin cancer
- Personal history of skin cancer
- Have a history of sunburns early in life
- Live or vacation at high altitudes
- Have freckles and burn quickly
- Have lots of moles, irregularly shaped moles, or large moles
- Have had an organ transplant
- Take certain medications
- Have certain diseases, such as lupus erythematosus

SUN SAFETY TIPS

School Administrators & Board Members:

- Introduce or support skin cancer prevention programs and school policies that promote sun safety.
- Communicate, enforce, and monitor skin cancer prevention programs and school policies that promote sun safety.
- Identify and, when appropriate, change existing school policies that interfere with sun safe behaviors (e.g. bans on wearing hats).
- Encourage the student council and the PTSA or PTO to promote sun safety.
- Design new school buildings and remodeling projects to include adequate shade next to playgrounds and sports fields (e.g. planting trees, installing awnings).
- Provide in-service trainings and health promotion programs for faculty and staff that address sun safety.
- Recognize students, parents, and school staff who practice sun safe behaviors.
- Seek resources to support environmental improvements on school property.

Teachers, Coaches, and Marching Band Directors:

- Encourage school administrators and board members to support skin cancer prevention programs and school policies that promote sun safety.
- Teach students about the importance of sun safe behaviors by including skin cancer prevention as part of a coordinated school health program.
- Provide sun safety education during times of the year when students are exposed to the sun.
- Provide sun safety information to parents and caregivers.

Parents & Guardians:

- Ask your school leaders what they are doing to promote sun safety at school.
- Participate actively with your PTSA or PTO to address the need for a sun safe school environment.
- Ask your PTSA or PTO to provide a presentation to parents, school leaders, and the community about sun safety and skin cancer prevention. Suggest selling sun safety items (hats, t-shirts, sunscreen) for fundraisers.
- If you are involved in planning an outdoor school activity, implement sun safe practices.
- Teach your kids to carry sunscreen and apply it often and properly. There are many different types of sunscreen to try. Find one you like and use it regularly.

Sources: American Cancer Society, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Environmental Protection Agency
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The American Cancer Society is the nationwide community-based voluntary health organization dedicated to eliminating cancer as a major health problem by preventing cancer, saving lives, and diminishing suffering from cancer, through research, education, advocacy, and service. No matter who you are, we can help. Contact us anytime, day or night, for information and support. **Hope.Progress.Answers.**® / 1.800.ACS.2345 / www.cancer.org