

A Parent's Guide to Sun Protection - Sun Fiction and Fact

Why are babies at risk?

Common sense tells us that babies have sensitive skin that can be damaged easily. This is especially true when it comes to the sun.

Babies are not born with a developed skin protection system, so they burn more easily. Even children born to parents with deeply pigmented (**dark**) skin require maximum protection.

Babies have more sensitive skin because the outermost layer of their skin is thinner.

A young child has more skin, relative to his body mass, than an adult, so a sunburn would be more serious.

A baby can't tell you she's too hot or the sun's too bright. Your baby may begin to cry and you won't know whether she's tired, hungry or hot.

Babies can't physically move themselves out of the sunlight. A six-month old on a blanket is less mobile than a one-year old who can toddle into the shade.

Ways to protect baby's skin

Keep babies under one year out of direct sunlight to prevent skin damage and dehydration. Keep babies in the shade, under a tree, an umbrella or a stroller canopy.

Dress your child in protective clothing. Comfortable long pants, long-sleeved shirts and broad-brimmed hats offer excellent protection against the sun. Closely woven materials are best. If a fabric is sheer enough that you can see through it, then the sun's rays will get through too. Wet T-shirts offer reduced protection.

Although it is better to use sunscreen with an **SPF** of at least 15 than to have a sunburned child, natural protection, such as clothing, hat and shade, is better still.

Do not put sunscreen on babies under six months old.

Ways to protect toddlers, pre-schoolers and up

The sun's **UVB** rays are stronger between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.. Unless children are protected, keep them out of the sun during those hours.

Use protective clothing and sunscreen anytime children are in direct sunlight. Take reflected light into account. Forty percent of the sun's damaging **UVB** rays can bounce back from sand, or snow in the winter.

In strong sunlight, get kids used to wearing sunglasses, the kind that screen out ultraviolet rays.

Children are vulnerable

Children spend more time in the sun than most adults, especially in the summer.

The skin can suffer a lot of damage in childhood. In fact, one of the conditions that puts people most at risk for skin cancer is two or more blistering sunburns as a child or adolescent. Other risk factors are:

- fair skin that tans poorly
- red or blonde hair;
- light-colored eyes - blue, gray or green;
- the use of tanning booths; sun lamps; reflectors and silver blankets;

- and any other exposure to **UV**.

Fiction: A tan is healthy.

Fact: A tan indicates that your skin has already been damaged.

Fiction: A tan will protect me from the sun

Fact: A dark tan in a white person offers an **SPF** of about 4.

Fiction: Black skin will protect me from the sun.

Fact: People with black skin can get sunburns and skin cancer. Black skin gives an **SFP** protection of about 8.

Fiction: You can't get burned on a cloudy day.

Fact: Up to 80 % of the sun's rays can penetrate light cloud, mist and fog.

Fiction: You can't get burned if you're in the water.

Fact: Water offers minimal protection. Water's reflection can intensify the sun's rays on you.

Fiction: Baby oil is a good sun lotion

Fact: Baby oil intensifies the effects of the sun and causes skin to burn faster.

http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/securit/sports/sun-sol/protecting-proteger_e.html