



Enjoy the Sun Safely: Be SunSmart

Myth-Busting Guide for
Parents of Babies and
Primary School Aged
Children



Be SunSmart

Did you know?

Babies and children have very sensitive skin. Getting sunburnt as a child increases the risk of melanoma skin cancer in later life. Melanoma is the most serious form of skin cancer. Children should enjoy being active and playing outdoors. The key is not to get caught out by the sun. There are simple things you can do to reduce this risk and keep children safe in the sun.



Do children only need sun protection on hot, sunny days in Ireland?

FACT

Ultraviolet (UV) radiation can damage skin even when it is cloudy. Up to 90% of harmful UV rays can pass through cloud. Protect skin all year round but especially from St Patrick's Day when the UV index is 3 or above, even when it is cloudy.

Is it true that Ireland's sun is not strong enough to harm my child?

FACT

Many parents are more vigilant about sun protection when abroad in hotter climates than in Ireland, yet UV radiation in Ireland can still cause sunburn and long-term skin damage. Childhood sunburn significantly increases the risk of skin cancer later in life.

Remember children need sun protection both at home and abroad.

Why is it important to avoid sunburn, especially during childhood?

FACT

Sunburn is a sign that skin cells have been damaged. Severe sunburn during childhood is linked to a higher risk of melanoma, the most serious form of skin cancer later in life.

Remember, every sunburn matters.

Why is it important for parents to model good sun protection habits for their children?

FACT

Children learn from the adults around them. Get into the habit of practicing sun protection at home. When parents wear hats, seek shade and use sunscreen, children are more likely to do the same. Sun protection habits learned from a young age are more likely to be kept in later life.

If my child doesn't burn easily, do I still need to protect their skin from the sun?

FACT

Sun damage builds up over time, whether skin burns or not. That's why it's important to protect all children from the sun. A tan does not protect against sunburn. A tan is skin's way of protecting itself against further sun damage.

Even when a tan fades, the skin damage caused by the sun never goes away.

Is one application of sunscreen enough to last all day?

FACT

No, no sunscreen can offer 100% protection. Sunscreen wears off through sweating, swimming, rubbing and normal activity. It should be reapplied every 2 hours or more often if sweating and always used alongside other protective measures.

Remember to apply, reapply, and don't rely on sunscreen alone.

If my child is only outside for short periods, is sun protection still necessary?

FACT

UV exposure builds up over time. School breaks, sports training, walks, playground visits and school runs all contribute to a child's total UV exposure.

Remember any time spent outdoors counts.

Do babies need sunscreen before any other form of sun protection?

FACT

For babies under 12 months, shade and protective clothing should be the main methods of protection. Keep babies out of direct sunlight whenever possible. It is better to protect babies up to 6 months old from sunlight by using shade and clothing rather than sunscreen. You may choose to use sunscreen sometimes on small parts of baby's skin. If you do, choose a sunscreen that is formulated for children. If a child has any skin conditions seek advice from your doctor with regards to sunscreen.

Is a baseball cap
ok to protect my
child's face from
the sun?



FACT

A baseball cap leaves the ears, neck and sides of the face exposed. A wide-brimmed hat offers much better protection for these vulnerable areas.

Remember, the wider the brim, the better the protection.

Is sunscreen all
my child needs
to protect their
skin from the
sun?

FACT

Sunscreen should never be the only form of protection. The best protection combines:



Slip on clothing: Cover skin as much as possible



Seek shade: Keep babies and children out of direct sunlight. Use a sunshade on buggies or prams, but never drape a blanket, cloth or other fabric over a buggy or pram as this can cause babies to overheat.



Slop on broad-spectrum (UVA/UVB) sunscreen with a SPF 50+ for children, with high UVA protection, and is water resistant.



Slap on a wide brimmed hat



Slide on sunglasses

No sunscreen provides 100% protection. Shade, clothing and sunglasses are just as important as sunscreen.

For further information visit: www.hse.ie/sunsmart

Follow the SunSmart 5 S's to protect skin from the sun:



Slip on
clothing



Slop on
sunscreen



Slap on a
wide-brimmed
hat



Seek
shade



Slide on
sunglasses

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