

How to become a SunSmart School

Please read the following information before submitting your application form.

Applying for the SunSmart School accreditation is free!
The SunSmart School Toolkit resource enclosed provides your school with information, resources and supports to become a SunSmart School.

Please complete the online application form AND send a copy of your schools' SunSmart Charter to prevention@cancercontrol.ie.

Full implementation of at least 5 of the strategies listed in Appendix 1 '**Criteria to become a SunSmart School**' in the toolkit resource enclosed is required in order to be considered for a SunSmart School accreditation. The HSE's NCCP will review the application to determine whether the school can be accredited as a SunSmart School.

The application form is available digitally at

<https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/6TUFH6/%20>



If your application is unsuccessful we will provide feedback on how to progress to successful accreditation.

If your application is approved you will be notified and you should keep an eye on the post for your SunSmart School certificate.

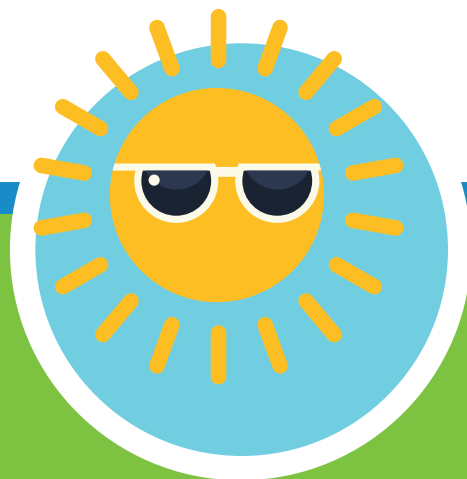
For more information visit www.hse.ie/sunsmart

Kind regards,

Dr Breedan Neville,
Consultant in Public Health Medicine,
HSE National Cancer Control Programme



Be SunSmart



SunSmart School Toolkit for Primary Schools

Be SunSmart

www.hse.ie/sunsmart



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Contents

Overview of SunSmart School Toolkit for Primary Schools	2
Why is being SunSmart important for children?	2
How does this toolkit support our Schools' Wellbeing Framework?	3
What are the objectives of Developing a SunSmart School?	3
Developing a SunSmart School: Step by Step Guide	4
Step 1: Plan and commit	
Step 2: Develop a SunSmart Charter	
Step 3: Implement SunSmart Practices	
Step 4: Apply for NCCP Accreditation as a SunSmart School	
Appendices	5
Appendix 1: Criteria to become a SunSmart School	5
Appendix 2: Gold Standard to become a SunSmart School	8
Appendix 3: Sample SunSmart Charter	9
Appendix 4: Case Study Examples on Incorporating Sun Protection into the Curriculum	11
Case Study 1	
Bekan National School, Co Mayo Promoting Sun Safety	11
Case Study 2	
'Dying to get a tan' Intel® Mini Scientist Competition by students from St John's National School, Cratloe Co Clare	12
Appendix 5: Sample letter for parents and guardians	13
Appendix 6: Useful SunSmart Supports and Resources	14



Overview of SunSmart School Toolkit for Primary Schools

Welcome to the SunSmart School Toolkit – this resource provides your school with information resources and supports to become a SunSmart School.

By completing some simple steps your school could be accredited by the Health Service Executive (HSE)'s National Cancer Control Programme (NCCP) as a SunSmart School.

The HSE's NCCP has developed SunSmart Primary School Lesson plans for junior infants to second class and third to sixth class for SPHE (Safety and Protection). These provide teachers with ideas and materials to support the integration of sun protection education and behaviours into the classroom.

Why is being SunSmart important for children?

Spending time outdoors is important. It is vital to protect skin when outside.

Ultraviolet radiation (UV) is a part of sunlight. It can damage skin and increase the risk of skin cancer. Skin cancer is Ireland's most common cancer with over 11,000 new cases diagnosed annually.

Children's skin is very sensitive to UV from the sun which can cause long term damage. UV exposure during the first 10–15 years of life makes a disproportionately large contribution to lifetime risk of skin cancer.



DID YOU KNOW?

Sunburn during childhood increases the risk of getting skin cancer as an adult.

A child's skin is thinner and more sensitive to damage than an adult's and they are more susceptible to the dangers of UV.

If a child or young person is badly sunburned more than 3 times before the age of 20, they more than double their risk of developing melanoma (the most serious form of skin cancer) as an adult.



The UV index is an international standard measurement used by the World Health Organization to quantify the level of UV from the sun at the surface of the earth at a particular place and time. The UV index is most likely to reach 3 or above in Ireland from St Patrick's Day onwards, meaning it is particularly important to take precautions to protect skin at that time of year, even when it is cloudy.

Children spend half of their childhood at school and about eight hours per week travelling to and from school, on lunch breaks, and participating in outdoor school-based activities. Much of this time falls between the hours of 11am and 3pm when the sun's UV rays are at their strongest. Schools can help protect children's skin, reducing risk of future skin cancers through education and role modelling.

How does this toolkit support our Schools' Wellbeing Framework?

This SunSmart School Toolkit for Primary Schools has been developed to help schools recognise the importance of promoting sun safety practices in the school environment. This toolkit links with the **Department of Education Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2018-2023** where wellbeing promotion is at the core of the ethos of every school and centre for education.

What are the objectives of Developing a SunSmart School?

This toolkit has been developed to provide information and tools for students, teachers, parents and guardians on how to:

- **Become a SunSmart Accredited School**
- **Providing learning opportunities for students, teachers, staff and families on sun protection**
- **Encourage students and staff to use a combination of sun protection measures**
- **Make your school a sun safe place for students and the whole school community**



Developing a SunSmart School: Step-by-Step Guide

When developing or reviewing the school's current practices on being a SunSmart School we suggest you work through the following step-by-step guide.

Step 1 – Plan and commit

- Communicate plans for accreditation as a SunSmart School with the whole school community.
- Identify who can become involved and be part of the working group (e.g. students, staff, principal).
- Use the checklist in [Appendix 1](#) to review current practices.

Step 2 – Develop a SunSmart Charter

- Use the SunSmart charter template in [Appendix 3](#) to map current activity. Use the results of your checklist in Step 1 to inform your charter. Keep the charter realistic and achievable.
- Display your charter in school and/or online to get buy-in from school community.

Step 3 – Implement SunSmart Practices

- Deliver SunSmart lessons as part of SPHE and/or integrate into other relevant curriculum areas. This pack includes links to relevant [SunSmart lesson plans and activity sheets](#).
- Display SunSmart posters in school.
- Provide relevant resources to parents and guardians.
- Decide which SunSmart actions for your school you plan to implement, for e.g. provide shade on school sports days, notify parents and guardians about SunSmart behaviours, or advise students to wear wide brimmed hats. See [Appendix 4](#) for ideas and case studies from other schools.
- Ensure an evaluation process is implemented.

Step 4 – Apply for NCCP Accreditation as a SunSmart School

- Complete registration form shared in the cover letter with this resource showing the criteria you meet and upload a copy of your SunSmart charter.
- If successful, CELEBRATE!
- Promote the accreditation as a SunSmart School with the whole school community by using the sample letter for parents and guardians in [Appendix 5](#).
- If unsuccessful, review criteria and reassess changes your school can make to become a SunSmart School.
- Review the charter annually and assess whether it needs to be updated. Review what SunSmart activity your school plans to undertake annually. Make a record for when your school is reapplying for accreditation in 3 years time.



Appendix 1: Criteria to become a SunSmart School

This checklist assists schools to become a SunSmart School. It is a list of potential SunSmart activities. You can choose which work for your school or add your ideas. The completed checklist can be used to inform the school's action plan on how to become a SunSmart School. Please note: Schools need to meet 5 criteria in order to apply for accreditation as a SunSmart School.

Suggested strategy	Implementation response		
Outdoor activities	Not started	In progress	Fully implemented
Outdoor activities are scheduled outside of high UV radiation times (between 11am to 3pm, from St Patrick's Day onwards) where possible, during school days. If this is not possible, sun protection is considered when planning all outdoor activities.	☐	☐	☐
When the UV index is 3 or higher, UV radiation protection strategies (such as hats, clothing, shade, and sunscreen) are implemented for all outdoor school activities, including excursions, sports days, and interschool sports events.	☐	☐	☐
The UV index is checked daily from St Patrick's Day onwards (while school is open) and communicated to the school community if the UV index is 3 or above. Staff and students are encouraged to access the daily local sun protection times via the free SunSmart Global UV app or www.met.ie/uv-index	☐	☐	☐
Shade			
An assessment of existing shade is conducted annually to review the quality and availability of shade.	☐	☐	☐
Staff and students are encouraged to use available areas of shade when outside, especially when the sun's UV rays are strongest, typically between 11am to 3pm from St Patrick's Day onwards.	☐	☐	☐

Suggested strategy	Implementation response		
Clothing	Not started	In progress	Fully implemented
Uniforms encourage covering skin for sun protection i.e. wide-brimmed hat, long sleeves.	☐	☐	☐
Staff and students are encouraged to wear a hat that protects their face, ears and neck where appropriate when outside (wide-brimmed, bucket or legionnaire style).	☐	☐	☐
Where practical, students are encouraged to wear close-fitting, wrap-around sunglasses that cover as much of the eye area as possible. Choose glasses that block 100% of UV rays (UVA and UVB) and carry the CE mark.	☐	☐	☐
Sunscreen			
The school regularly communicates with parents and guardians, reminding them to ensure their children apply sunscreen SPF 50+ before coming to school.	☐	☐	☐
Students are encouraged to bring their own sunscreen from home and reapply regularly themselves at school and during extended outdoor activities.	☐	☐	☐
For schools that have decided to supply sunscreen, SPF50+ broad-spectrum (UVA/UVB protection), water-resistant sunscreen will be available for students to use at various points throughout the school.	☐	☐	☐
Education and awareness raising			
The school commits to delivering SunSmart Primary School Lesson plans.	☐	☐	☐
Sun safety education will be integrated into the curriculum where relevant.	☐	☐	☐



Suggested strategy	Implementation response		
Education and awareness raising	Not started	In progress	Fully implemented
Posters promoting SunSmart behaviours are visible throughout the school.	☐	☐	☐
Students are encouraged to be involved in initiatives to promote and model sun protection measures at the school including taking leadership roles in managing sun protection for the whole school community.	☐	☐	☐
Communication about being SunSmart occurs regularly e.g. newsletters, intranet, at school assembly.	☐	☐	☐
School community engagement			
School staff role model SunSmart behaviours.	☐	☐	☐
Designate at least one SunSmart Champion (staff and/or students) to inform and encourage school-wide SunSmart behaviour.	☐	☐	☐
Other			
<i>List your own ideas/ suggestions here</i>	☐	☐	☐
<i>List your own ideas/ suggestions here</i>	☐	☐	☐
<i>List your own ideas/ suggestions here</i>	☐	☐	☐

Appendix 2:

Gold Standard to become a SunSmart School



Gold Standard to become a SunSmart School



Why primary schools?

- Skin cancer is the most common cancer in Ireland
- Over 11,000 new cases diagnosed every year. This number is expected to double by 2045
- Getting sunburnt in childhood or adolescence can increase the risk of melanoma, the most serious form of skin cancer, in later life.

1

Education & Awareness

Our school aims to educate students, staff and parents about the importance of sun protection and the potential risks associated with excessive sun exposure.

2

Promotion of Sun Safety Practices

We are committed to promoting sun safety practices, including the regular application of sunscreen, wearing protective clothing, seeking shade during peak sun hours, wearing hats and sunglasses when outdoors.

3

Integration into curriculum

We will integrate sun safety education into our curriculum, ensuring that students receive age appropriate instruction on the importance of sun protection and how to incorporate sun safety into their daily lives including the SunSmart 5 S's.

4

Role Modelling

Staff members will serve as role models by practicing sun safety behaviours and encouraging students to the same.

5

Community Engagement

We will engage with parents, caregivers, and the wider community to promote sun safety practices and raise awareness about the importance of sun protection.

6

Policy Implementation

Our school will develop and implement policies that support sun safety, including guidelines for outdoor activities, access to sunscreen and shaded areas.



Appendix 3: Sample SunSmart Charter

Sample SunSmart Charter for

Rationale

- Become a SunSmart Accredited School.
- Skin cancer is the most common cancer in Ireland.
- Over 11,000 new are cases diagnosed every year¹. This number is expected to almost double by 2045².
- Ultraviolet (UV) radiation damage accumulated during childhood and adolescence is strongly associated with an increased risk of skin cancer later in life.

At we are dedicated to the holistic development and well-being of our students, staff, and wider community, and we recognise the importance of promoting sun safety practices. This is in line with the DES Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2018-2023 where wellbeing promotion is at the core of the ethos of every school and centre for education.

Our school will provide:

1. **Education and Awareness:** Our school aims to educate students, staff, parents and guardians about the importance of sun protection and the potential risks associated with excessive sun exposure.
2. **Promotion of SunSmart Practices:** We are committed to promoting sun safety practices, including the regular application of sunscreen, wearing protective clothing, seeking shade during peak sun hours, wearing hats and sunglasses when outdoors.
3. **Integration into Curriculum:** We will integrate sun safety education into our curriculum especially in our SPHE programme, ensuring that students receive age-appropriate instruction on the importance of sun protection and how to incorporate sun safety practices into their daily lives including the SunSmart 5 S's.
4. **Role Modelling:** Staff members will serve as role models by practicing sun safety behaviours and encouraging students to do the same.
5. **Community Engagement:** We will engage with parents, guardians and the wider community to promote sun safety practices and raise awareness about the importance of sun protection during our Wellbeing Week.
6. **Policy Implementation:** Our school will develop and implement policies that support sun safety, including guidelines for outdoor activities, access to sunscreen and shaded areas.

¹ National Cancer Registry Ireland (2024) Cancer in Ireland 1994-2022: Annual statistical report of the National Cancer Registry. NCRI, Cork, Ireland.

² National Cancer registry. Cancer incidence projections for Ireland 2020-2045. Cork: NCRI; 2019.

Conclusion:

By adopting this SunSmart Charter, our school demonstrates its commitment to promoting sun safety and protecting the health and well-being of our students, staff, and wider community.

Through education, awareness, and collaboration, we will create a SunSmart culture that reduces risk of future skin cancers or UV related health issues.

Signed:

School Name:

Dated:/...../.....

Review Date:/...../.....



Appendix 4: Case Study Examples on Incorporating Sun Protection into the Curriculum

Case Study 1: Bekan National School, Co Mayo Promoting Sun Safety

In 2024, 5th and 6th class students at Bekan National School Co. Mayo participated in the Junior Entrepreneur Programme. As part of this initiative, the children were required to research a business idea and sell a product, with the goal of using the proceeds to benefit their class. Their aim was to subsidise their school trip to Emerald Park, a reward they were very excited about.

Coincidentally, during the course of their project, all schools in the country received a letter from the HSE's National Cancer Control Programme recommending that schools encourage children to wear hats during the summer months to protect themselves from harmful ultraviolet (UV) rays. This timely recommendation inspired the students to focus their business idea on promoting sun safety.

The students decided to design and sell fashionable yet practical bucket style hats for their peers. They researched various styles and materials, ensuring that their products were both appealing and effective in providing sun protection. The project not only educated them about the entrepreneurial process but also raised their awareness about the importance of sun safety—a lesson that will benefit them for years to come. Every child that bought a hat also received the 'For Everyone Under the Sun' brochure which the Irish Skin Foundation supplied.

Through their hard work and dedication, the students successfully sold their hats and achieved their goal of subsidising their school trip. This project was a tremendous success, and it instilled in the students a sense of responsibility towards their health and wellbeing, as well as that of their peers. During the school's sports day this year the children wore their bucket hats!

Class teacher, Margaret McGing said "We are proud of our students' achievements and believe that their project aligns perfectly with the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment's (NCCA) goals. We hope that you find this story as inspiring as we do and that it may serve as an example of how young people can contribute to promoting sun safety in our communities".



Case Study 2:

'Dying to get a tan' Intel® Mini Scientist Competition by students from St John's National School, Cratloe Co. Clare

A group of 6th class students at St John's National School in Cratloe, Co. Clare undertook a project entitled 'dying to get a tan' for the Intel® mini scientist competition 2024. The students came second at their schools' competition. They distributed a questionnaire to 64 of their peers; they blind tested how much sunscreen they typically apply to their legs and compared it against the recommended amount; they used a UV meter to measure the blocking effects of SPF on a UV sensor under various different real life environmental conditions.

The 3 research questions were:

1. **What do students in 5th and 6th class currently know about sunscreen?**
2. **How much sunscreen do students really apply?**
3. **What common environmental factors reduce the effectiveness of sunscreen once it has been applied?**

They then made various recommendations about how awareness of the harmful effects of the sun and UV protection could be enhanced within the school.

The Intel® Mini Scientist competition gives primary school students from 4th, 5th and 6th class the opportunity to explore science and technology through project based learning and exhibitions.

Dr Lorraine Walsh, a parent of one of the students and a Consultant Radiation Oncologist, at the Mid-Western Radiation Oncology Centre, c/o Mater Private Network in the University Hospital Limerick said

"The results of the boys' project were very enlightening. They got a real insight into the fact that many of their peers are not aware of how to correctly use SPF, when to use it, how much to apply and how often it should be reapplied. It was amazing to see the demonstration of how the effectiveness of SPF product reduces over time and by being washed off by water or sweat. Their recommendations to the school are a great means of enhancing sun protection education within the school community".



Appendix 5: Sample letter for parents and guardians

..... has been accredited as a SunSmart School! This means we recognise the importance of promoting sun safety practices in the school environment. We recognise that while being outdoors is good for us, sun protection is an important health and safety issue.

At we:

- Encourage the whole school community to use a combination of sun protection measures whenever UV Index levels reach 3 or higher.
- We teach students about sun safety especially in our SPHE programme, ensuring that students receive age-appropriate instruction on the importance of sun protection and how to incorporate sun safety practices into their daily lives including the SunSmart 5 S's.
- Work towards a safe school environment that provides shade for students, staff and the school community at appropriate times.
- Assist students to be responsible for their own sun protection.

Your child's health and wellbeing is very important to us and we believe it is important that we educate them about sun safety and following the SunSmart 5 S's. So we'll be encouraging your child to:



Slip on clothing that covers your skin, long sleeves, collared t-shirts



Slop on sunscreen on exposed areas using factor 50+ for children



Slap on a wide-brimmed hat



Seek shade - especially if outdoors between 11 am and 3 pm



Slide on sunglasses to protect your eyes

I hope we can create a SunSmart School for everyone so that we can all enjoy the sun safely.

Yours sincerely,

<Contact Name>

<Contact Person's Position>

Appendix 6:

Useful SunSmart Supports and Resources

Below are useful supports and resources to help teachers, parents and guardians to protect children and young people from overexposure to UV radiation.

The HSE's NCCP has developed SunSmart Primary School Lesson plans for junior infants to second class and third to sixth class for SPHE (Safety and Protection). These provide teachers with ideas and materials to support the integration of sun protection education and behaviours into the classroom. This resource can be downloaded from **www.healthpromotion.ie/products**. Choose 'cancer' from the drop down menu and search 'Lesson Plan'. Hard copies are available to order by emailing **prevention@cancercontrol.ie**

The Get SunSmart! Children's Art Competition is run annually by the HSE's NCCP in collaboration with Healthy Ireland. The competition is open to all primary school children. For more information on competition opening dates and details on the competition visit **www.gov.ie/getsunsmart**

A selection of resources has been included in this folder and more can be ordered from **www.healthpromotion.ie/products**

All available SunSmart posters and leaflets can be downloaded or hard copies ordered on **www.healthpromotion.ie/products** Choose 'cancer' from the drop down menu.

For more information on SunSmart visit **www.hse.ie/sunsmart**

A wide range of SunSmart videos are available on the NCCP YouTube channel by clicking **[here](#)**

Irish Skin Foundation have also developed a number of SunSmart videos available by clicking **[here](#)**

For more information and to raise awareness of protecting skin from the sun to reduce the risk of skin cancer contact **prevention@cancercontrol.ie**

Senior Health Promotion and Improvement Officers - Cancer Prevention work within the HSE. They work with their local Health Promotion and Improvement team to implement health and wellbeing initiatives which seek to reduce cancer risk, improve awareness of cancer symptoms and support timely help-seeking among target populations in their region. Schools can link with the Senior Health Promotion and Improvement Officer - Cancer Prevention in their area for further support relating to SunSmart.



Area	Name / Contact details
HSE National Cancer Control Programme (National)	Maria McEnery Cancer Prevention Officer prevention@cancercontrol.ie
HSE West and North West: HSE Mayo HSE Galway Roscommon	Caroline Murray Senior HP and Improvement Officer - Cancer Prevention 087 4089668 caroline.murray3@hse.ie
HSE Mid-West: HSE Limerick City and Tipperary North HSE Clare and Limerick County	Bernadette Mullins Senior HP and Improvement Officer - Cancer Prevention 087 4065038 bernadette.mullins@hse.ie
HSE South West: HSE Cork North and East HSE Kerry HSE Cork South and West	Shirley O'Shea Senior HP and Improvement Officer - Cancer Prevention 087 6670857 Shirley.OShea@hse.ie
HSE Dublin and South East: HSE Carlow Kilkenny and Tipperary South HSE Waterford Wexford HSE Dublin South and Wicklow	Ann Marie Lawlor Senior HP and Improvement Officer - Cancer Prevention 087 6627377 annmarie.lawlor@hse.ie
HSE Dublin and North East: HSE Dublin North City and West HSE Dublin North County	Lisa O'Donnell Senior HP and Improvement Officer - Cancer Prevention 087 9375812 lisa.odonnell@hse.ie
HSE Dublin and Midlands: HSE Dublin South City and West HSE Dublin South West HSE Kildare West Wicklow HSE Midlands	Edel Byrne Senior HP and Improvement Officer - Cancer Prevention 087 7488666 edel.byrne6@hse.ie
Please Note: Areas with no Senior HP and Improvement Officer - Cancer Prevention in their area can email prevention@cancercontrol.ie	

Notes

[illegible]



Be SunSmart





UV Index

To check the UV Index go to www.met.ie/uv-index

LOW	NO PROTECTION REQUIRED
1-2	Unless outdoors for extended periods, or near reflective surfaces such as snow or water.
MODERATE	PROTECTION REQUIRED
3-5	Slip on clothing. Slop on sunscreen, use sun protection factor (SPF) 30 for adults and 50 for children. Slap on a wide brimmed hat. Seek shade during midday hours. Slide on sunglasses, wraparound are best.
HIGH	EXTRA PROTECTION REQUIRED
6-7	
8-10	Avoid being outside during midday hours. Make sure you seek shade. Always wear sunscreen and protective clothing i.e. shirt, hat, and sunglasses.
EXTREME	
11+	

Follow the SunSmart 5 S's to reduce your risk of skin cancer



Slip on clothing that covers
your skin



Slop on sunscreen on exposed
areas using factor 30+ for adults
and 50+ for children



Slap on a wide-brimmed hat



Seek shade – especially if outdoors
between 11am and 3pm



Slide on sunglasses

Do not deliberately try to get a suntan.
Avoid getting a sunburn. **Never use a sunbed.**

Colour in the SunSmart picture

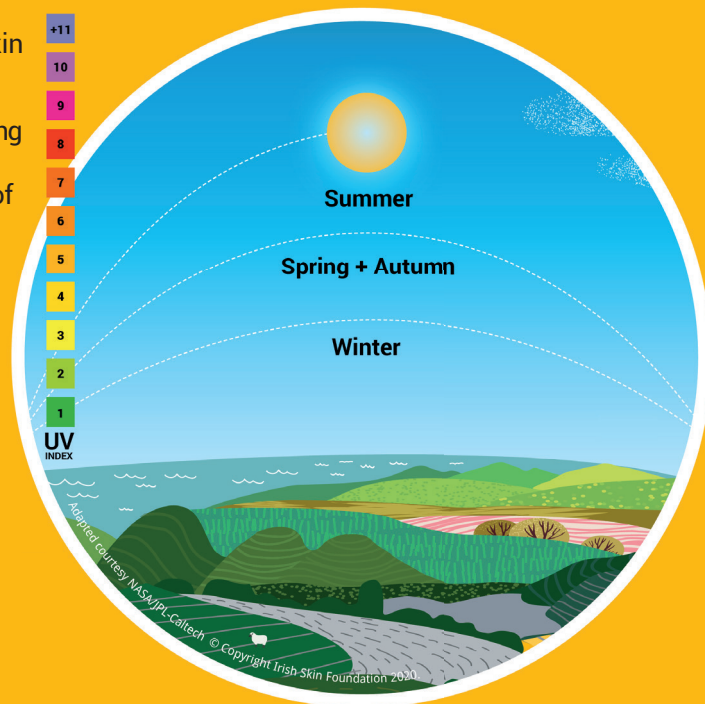


- Slip on clothing that covers your skin such as, long sleeves, collared t-shirts
- Seek shade - especially if outdoors between 11am and 3pm
- Slap on a wide - brimmed hat
- Slide on sunglasses to protect your eyes
- Slop on sunscreen on exposed areas, using factor 50+ for children

Playing outdoors: Skin protection for children

**Playing and spending time outdoors is good for your child.
But it is important to protect their skin when outside in the sun.**

- Ultraviolet (UV) radiation is part of sunlight. It can damage skin and increase risk of skin cancer.
- Children's skin is very sensitive to UV from the sun. Sunburn during childhood increases the risk of getting skin cancer as an adult. If your child is badly sunburned more than 3 times before the age of 20, they more than double their risk of skin cancer as an adult.
- In Ireland, UV from the sun is strongest between 11am and 3pm, even when it is cloudy.
- **Protect yourself and children's skin all year round by being SunSmart but especially from St Patrick's Day.**



SunSmart simple steps can protect children's skin and avoid getting sunburn: **Remember the SunSmart 5 'Ss'**, even when it is cloudy



- For children up to 1 year old, it is best to keep them in the shade and wear clothing that covers their skin when outdoors.
- 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 for babies such as sensitive or toddler sunscreen.



Slip on clothing: Cover skin as much as possible e.g. wear long sleeves, collared t-shirts, clothes made from close-woven material that does not allow sunlight through.



Slop on broad-spectrum (UVA/UVB) sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 30+ for adults and 50+ for children, with high UVA protection, and is water resistant. Reapply regularly.



Slap on a hat with a wide brim: Protect your face, ears and neck.



Seek shade: Sit in cover of trees to avoid direct sunlight and use a sunshade on your buggy or pram. Keep babies and children out of direct sunlight.



Slide on sunglasses with UV protection: Guard your eyes from harm.