

Sun Safety

It is important for us all to be in the sun sometimes because the sun provides us with vitamin D. Vitamin D helps our bodies to absorb calcium which makes our bones strong and healthy. However, being in the sun too much can cause skin damage, eye damage and even skin cancer. Parents need to teach their children how to stay safe in the sun and how to protect their skin from ultraviolet (UV) rays.



Dangers of the Sun

The light from the sun has invisible UV rays. These rays are what make our skin tan and burn. There are three types of ultraviolet rays: UVA, UVB and UVC.

UVA rays

UVA rays break through the protective layer of the atmosphere (the ozone layer). These cause skin aging and contribute to skin cancer.

UVB rays

These are also dangerous and can cause sunburn and eye damage. They can also cause skin cancer. UVB rays do not pass through the ozone layer as easily as UVA rays. However, enough get through to cause serious damage.

UVC rays

These are the most dangerous but they cannot break through the ozone layer and therefore don't reach earth.



Sun Safety

Melanin

Our skin has melanin in it and its job is to soak up dangerous UV rays before they cause skin damage. If you have lighter skin, you have less melanin. If you have darker skin, you have more melanin. People with lighter skin need to do more to protect their skin from the sun.

Our skin tans in the sun as more melanin is produced to protect it. If our skin is exposed to too much sun, the melanin can no longer protect it and we begin to burn.



How to Protect Your Skin

There are some simple ways to protect your skin and prevent sun damage:

- Stay out of the sun between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. as this is when it is at its hottest.
- Apply sunscreen regularly, especially if you are in and out of water.
- Wear a hat to protect your head and face from the sun's UV rays. Remember that your scalp can burn too!
- Wear sunglasses to protect your eyes. Buy sunglasses that provide 100% UV protection.

Remember...

Use a sunscreen that has an SPF of 30 or higher and make sure that it protects against UVA and UVB rays.



