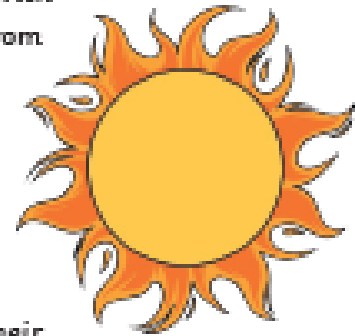


Sun Safety

Exposure to the sun is important as it provides us with vitamin D. Vitamin D helps our bodies absorb calcium from our food which makes our bones strong and healthy.

However, too much exposure to the sun's UV (ultraviolet) rays can cause skin damage, eye damage and even skin cancer.

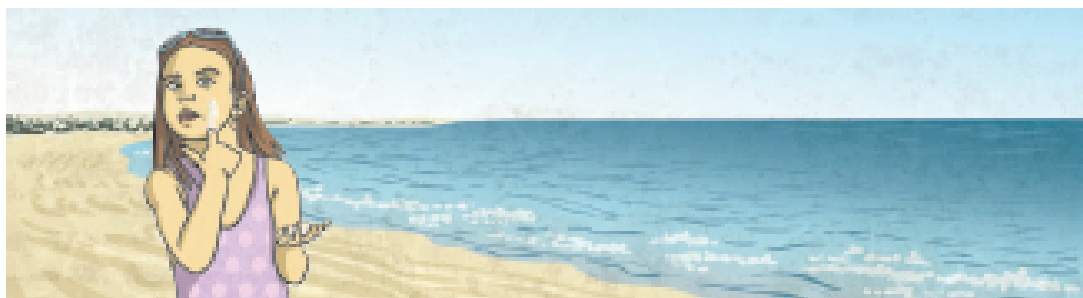
Children get a lot of sun exposure before the age of 18 and so it is important that they learn how to protect their skin in the sun.



Sun Exposure

The light that the sun provides has invisible UV rays. When these rays reach the skin, they cause it to tan or burn. Sunlight contains three types of ultraviolet rays: UVA, UVB and UVC.

- UVA rays can cause skin damage and even skin cancer. UVA rays pass through the earth's protective shield (the ozone layer) and make up the majority of our sun exposure.
- UVB rays can contribute to sunburn and eye damage. Most UVB rays are absorbed by the ozone layer, however, enough of them do pass through to cause serious damage to our skin.
- UVC rays are the most dangerous. Fortunately, these are blocked by the ozone layer and don't reach the earth.



Sun Safety

Melanin: The Body's Defence

Our skin has a chemical called melanin in it. When our skin is exposed to the sun, the melanin reacts and tries to absorb the dangerous UV rays. As the melanin reacts to the sun, our skin tans. If the skin is exposed to too much sun, the melanin can no longer protect it and the skin then burns.

The lighter someone's skin is, the less melanin it has. The darker someone's skin, the more melanin it has. Therefore, those with lighter skin need to take more precautions to protect their skin from the sun.



How to Protect Your Skin

In order to protect your skin from the sun, there are several things to remember. Firstly, stay out of the sun when it is at its hottest (usually between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.). Secondly, apply sunscreen regularly. If you are in and out of water, you will need to use a sunscreen which is water resistant so that it doesn't wash off. Thirdly, wear a hat to protect your head and face (the scalp can burn very easily and so needs to be protected) and lightweight clothes to protect your body. Lastly, don't forget about your eyes! Sun exposure damages the eyes as well as the delicate skin around it. Therefore, wear a pair of sunglasses that protect against UVA and UVB rays.



Did You Know...?

Not all sunscreens are the same and some have less protection than others.

Check the bottle and make sure that it protects against both UVA and UVB rays.

Buy one that has a factor of at least 30; factor 50 is the highest and is known as 'sunblock'.

Sun Safety Questions

1. What nutrient does vitamin D help our bodies to absorb? Tick one.

- vitamin E
- calcium
- iron
- vitamin C

2. Fill in the missing word.

Children get a lot of sun _____ before the age of 18 and so it is important that they learn how to protect their skin in the sun.

3. Find and copy a word that shows that we cannot see UV rays.

4. Which UV ray are we exposed to the most? Tick one.

- UVA
- UVB
- UVC
- all of them

5. Explain why someone with lighter skin needs to take more precaution to protect their skin than someone with darker skin.

6. Draw lines to show how you can protect different parts of your body.

Wear sunscreen _____ to protect your eyes.

Wear a hat _____ to protect your body.

Wear sunglasses _____ to protect all of your skin.

Wear lightweight clothes _____ to protect your scalp.

7. What factor does 'sunblock' have?

8. Explain why it is important to check your bottle of sunscreen.
