

# Health Tips for Parents

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## How can I protect my child from sun damage?

Sunscreens protect the skin by blocking the absorption of ultraviolet (UV) radiation, but additional caution should be taken.



The sun emits two main types of rays: UVA (ultraviolet A) and UVB (ultraviolet B). “UVA rays penetrate the outer layer of skin, damage skin cells and are the primary cause of sunburns. UVB rays penetrate deep into the layers of the skin and cause premature signs of aging such as wrinkles and age spots. Frequent and/or intense exposure to both types of ultraviolet rays are strongly linked to all forms of skin cancer,” says Ronald Cotliar, MD, UCLA pediatric dermatologist.



### Importance of sunscreens

Sunscreens help extend the length of time you can be outdoors before your skin begins to redden, but don't offer 100 percent protection from skin-cell damage. Selecting a good sunscreen is important in protecting the skin. The sun protection factor (SPF) on a sunscreen label is a measure of how well the sunscreen

protects against ultraviolet B (UVB) rays. Sunscreen should be applied 15 to 30 minutes prior to sun exposure to all areas of skin that is not covered by clothing.

The American Academy of Dermatology recommends choosing a sunscreen that offers a broad-spectrum protection (protects against both UVA and UVB rays), has an SPF of 30 or higher and is water resistant to provide protection while swimming or sweating. The type of sunscreen, provided it has adequate SPF, is a matter of personal choice, but it should be applied generously and frequently throughout the day. Available options include lotions, creams, gels, ointments, wax sticks and sprays.

### Treatment for sunburns

To treat sunburns, apply cool or iced compresses or wet towels to the skin and constantly re-wet the towels. Over-the-counter topical moisturizing lotions can be used to help reduce inflammation.

### Tips for sun protection:

- 1 Use sunscreen year-round, even when it's cloudy outdoors
- 2 Reapply sunscreen generously and frequently
- 3 Seek shade when appropriate
- 4 Apply sunscreen 15 to 30 minutes before going outdoors
- 5 Limit your sun exposure to between 10 am and 4 pm, when UV rays are the strongest
- 6 Wear a hat with a wide brim and tightly woven clothing that covers most of your skin
- 7 Wear polarized sunglasses
- 8 Avoid tanning beds and sunlamps
- 9 Wear swim shirts or rash guards for water activity
- 10 Use UV protectant laundry additive to clothing to give extra protection



## Prevention is the best protection

“There is no such thing as a safe, healthy or protective tan,” Dr. Cotliar says.

“Any tan – caused by sun exposure, tanning beds or sun lamps – can lead to skin cancer. The best treatment for a sunburn is not to get one.”