

# Building Blocks

Newsletter Promoting Children's Health from the Anne Arundel County Department of Health

## Be Sun Smart

Kids love playing outside and it is important to keep them safe from the sun's rays. Playing and learning outside is a central part of the daily activities for your family. Did you know that a few serious sunburns can increase a child's risk of developing skin cancer later in life?



Below are tips to help you and your children be safe in the sun:

- Generously apply a broad-spectrum, water-resistant sunscreen with a sun protective factor (SPF) of 30 or more to all exposed skin. Only broad-spectrum provides protection from ultraviolet A (UVA) and ultraviolet B (UVB) rays.
- Apply sunscreen 30 minutes before going out in the sun.
- Apply sunscreen even on cloudy days and re-apply after swimming, sweating and using a towel.
- Check the label for the manufacturer's instructions on when to re-apply sunscreen. Re-applying every two hours is the minimum recommendation.
- Wear protective clothing, such as a long sleeve shirt, pants, wide-brimmed hat and sunglasses.
- Take breaks under the shade and hydrate with water.
- Use extra caution when near water, snow and sand as they reflect the damaging rays of the sun which can increase the risk of skin cancer.

### Buying Guide: Sunglasses for Children

Children under age 10 are at a high risk for skin and eye damage from UV rays. The skin on their eyelids and around their eyes is more delicate and vulnerable than adult skin. The lens coating on their eye is clear, allowing greater UV penetration and greater damage



to the eye. UV damage builds over time, so the sooner you start protecting your children's eyes from the sun, the lower their risk will be of ever developing eye problems. The Skin Cancer Foundation and Environmental Protection Agency recommend these guidelines to keep in mind when buying sunglasses for children.

- Purchase sunglasses that block 99 – 100 percent of both UVA and UVB rays. The more skin covered, the better, so look for large wrap-around styles.
- Use playground proof lenses. Kids run, trip, fall and bounce off objects at an alarming speed. Their sunglasses should match this active lifestyle. You can find impact-resistant, scratch-proof lenses that do not pop out of frames.

## Keeping Your Family Safe in the Sun

Learn about the different types of skin cancers. Order a Sun Safety Kit by calling Learn To Live Line at 410-222-7979 or visit [www.LearnToLiveHealthy.org](http://www.LearnToLiveHealthy.org). The Anne Arundel County Department of Health's Learn To Live program offers a variety of free materials on cancer prevention and healthy living topics.



- Let them choose. You're not the one who has to wear glasses or hear the other kids' comments about them. Children are more likely to wear the glasses that they select themselves.
- If your child wears prescription eyeglasses, consider purchasing prescription sunglasses.
- Make sure the lenses are not scratched or warped and have no other flaws that distort vision. Very young children may not know to complain if the glasses are flawed.
- Double up. Sunglasses block only rays that come through the lenses. The skin around the eyes remains vulnerable to rays entering from the side or the top. Rays are also reflected upwards off snow, sand or water. Wearing a wide-brimmed hat is a good backup, to help block out rays while shielding the face and neck. Seeking shade during the sun's most intense hours – from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., – provides another level of protection.
- Sunburn is the skin reddening caused by overexposure to the sun's harmful ultraviolet (UV) radiation. It may seem like just a temporary irritation, but sunburns can cause long-lasting damage to the skin.
- Everyone is at risk for the development of skin cancer, including Hispanics, African Americans and others with a darker complexion.
- The risk for developing melanoma, the most deadly type of skin cancer, doubles if you have had more than five sunburns.
- Children are especially at risk because one blistering sunburn during childhood more than doubles a person's chances of developing melanoma later in life.
- Regular use of SPF 30 broad spectrum sunscreen reduces the risk of melanoma by 50 percent.

### A Note About Infants

It is recommended that infants under six months should not wear sunscreen. When infants are outside, it is important that they are in the shade and wear protective clothing that covers their entire body, including hats and sunglasses.

For more information on sun protection for infants, search "Should You Put Sunscreen on Infants?" on [www.fda.gov](http://www.fda.gov).

### Did You Know?



Sources: American Academy of Dermatology, National Cancer Institute, American Cancer Society, Skin Cancer Foundation.

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# Learn To Live

Anne Arundel County Department of Health

[www.LearnToLiveHealthy.org](http://www.LearnToLiveHealthy.org)  
410-222-7979

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