

PHGSA Hints and Tips

Sun Safety for Outdoor Sports

SUN FACTS

Anyone can sunburn.

Medical experts now believe that protecting the skin as a child and teenager can significantly reduce the risk of skin cancer and premature skin aging as an adult.

Research shows a link between blistering sunburns in children and an increased risk of melanoma (the deadliest form of skin cancer) and other skin cancers.

Children receive about 80% of their lifetime sun exposure by the age of 18. Sun-induced skin cancers are the most common cancers in Caucasian adults. The incidence of skin cancer is increasing in epidemic proportions in our country.

The risk of developing a melanoma, a deadly skin cancer, doubles every 10 years.

Protecting skin from the sun's rays could prevent about 80% of skin cancers. Harmful ultraviolet rays (UV) reflect off water and light colored surfaces, such as concrete, sand, and snow. UV-rays also reach below the surface of water.

SUNSCREEN TIPS FOR ADULTS

Use sunscreen every day of the year. Even on cloudy days up 80% of the sun's harmful rays reach earth.

Wear a sunscreen everyday that has at least a Sun Protection Factor (SPF) of 15. Products that contain the following ingredients provide the broadest degree of protection: avobenzome (Parsol-1789), titanium dioxide, zinc oxide.

Sunscreens work by absorbing most of the sun's rays before they penetrate the skin, but some still get through.

Water resistant sunscreens protect skin for 40 minutes of water exposure. Waterproof sunscreens protect for 80 minutes.

Use plenty. Studies have shown that the average person uses about 1/2 the amount of sunscreen that the manufacturer used when determining the SPF value. The average adult requires one ounce (oz) of sunscreen for adequate total body coverage. Children require about half this amount.

Apply to dry skin about 15 to 30 minutes *before* going outdoors. Reapply after sweating, swimming or toweling off.

Understand Sun Protection Factors (SPF). A SPF of 8 filters out 86% of ultraviolet radiation. SPF 15 blocks 92% of damaging rays and SPF 30 blocks 96% of ultraviolet rays. Remember- apply sunscreen to lips, ears and exposed scalp.

Spray, Gel and Lotion forms are now available. Sprays work best on the body and are fun for children. Gels work well for oily skin or when working and sweating. Lotions help dry skin.

Stick balms are great for lips and ears. These can also be used around the eyes to avoid stinging.

SUNSCREEN TIPS FOR CHILDREN

Set a good example. Parents and caregivers should protect their own skin *everyday* all year long by applying moisturizers or sunscreens with at least a sun protection factor (SPF) of 15. Even on cloudy days up to 80% of the sun's harmful rays reach earth.

Use plenty. The average child requires one-half ounce (oz) of sunscreen for adequate total body coverage.

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Spray forms are fun for children and are quickly applied to large areas of the body. Lotions work best on the face.

Avoid use on infants six months and younger as sunscreens may irritate baby skin. Care should be taken to totally avoid sun exposure during this period.

Pack sunscreen in children's lunch box or book bag. Ask them to use again before going outdoors for recess or lunch.

OTHER IMPORTANT TIPS

Minimize sun exposure between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. when the greatest amount of ultraviolet light exists. If your shadow is longer than you are tall, there is much less risk to being outside.

Wear Hats. Each inch of hat brim can lower your *lifetime* risk of skin cancer by 10%. A hat brim of four inches or greater is recommended. Make certain that the top and brim of a straw hat have sun proof liners in place.

Wear protective eyewear. Sunglasses with UV-blocking filters are very important. The eye is the second most common site in which melanomas develop.

Shop for "safari" type, light-weight, vented clothing that is designed for maximal comfort as well as sun protection.

Some medications can increase sensitivity to the sun's rays. Certain antibiotics, birth control pills, diuretics, antihistamines and antidepressants may cause increased sensitivity to the sun. Dress accordingly and take extra precautions if you are taking any of these medications.

Discourage use of tanning parlors. Tanning devices can damage the skin and eyes as much as direct sunlight and have been linked to increased risk of developing melanoma.

Check the UV Index each day and dress accordingly. The UV Index is a prediction of the sun's UV radiation on any given day at noon. Check the Internet, your local newspaper, television or radio for your local daily UV Index.

Talk with teachers, childcare providers, and camp counselors, asking them to schedule outdoor activities in the shade or early morning or late afternoon.

UV-blocking plastic film applied to the inside of the windows of your house or car can greatly decrease the amount of ultraviolet rays reaching your skin.