

Sun Protection for Babies and Toddlers



The Cancer Society advises sun protection when the Ultraviolet Index (UVI), which measures the intensity of ultraviolet radiation (UVR), is 3 or above. The peak UVR period is between September and April, especially between 10 am and 4 pm.

The sun's ultraviolet radiation (UVR)

- UVR can burn a young child's delicate skin in a few minutes.
- UVR can penetrate light cloud, and therefore can burn skin on overcast days.
- UVR cannot be felt, is invisible and its effects are delayed, therefore its presence is not immediately obvious, unlike heat, for example.
- Sunburn can also occur in the shade. This is because UVR is scattered in the atmosphere and is also reflected by surfaces such as concrete, water and sand.

Recommendations

Keep infants out of the sun as much as possible from September to April, especially between 10 am and 4 pm.

When this is not possible, reduce exposure of infants to UVR as follows:

- Plan the day's activities to maximise your infant's sun protection.
- Cover as much of the infant's skin as possible with loose fitting clothes and wraps made from closely woven fabrics.
- Choose a broad-brim or legionnaire style hat or bucket hat so the infant's face, neck and ears are protected.

- Provide full shade for the infant's pram, stroller or play area. The material used should cast a dark shadow. The infant will still need to be protected from scattered and reflected UVR.
- Check the infant's clothing, hat and shade positioning regularly to ensure they continue to provide protection from the sun.

What about sunscreen?

Be cautious about using sunscreen on babies under one year of age. (It's best to keep your baby out of strong sunlight). However, if there is a risk that your baby might be sunburned, apply a SPF30+ broad spectrum sunscreen on areas of the skin not able to be covered by clothing. If toddlers have to be in the sun, use recommended sunscreen on uncovered skin. Make sure that sunscreen is water resistant if they are playing in water.

Sunscreen should be applied 15 minutes before going outside and reapplied every two hours. As with any products that are applied to the skin, the use of any sunscreen should cease immediately if any unusual reaction is observed.

What about Vitamin D?

During daylight savings months, New Zealand's high UVR levels mean that even when babies are outdoors for short periods before 10 am and after 4 pm with small amounts of skin exposed, they are likely to receive enough ultraviolet radiation exposure to maintain healthy vitamin D levels.

In winter, it is generally safe and advisable for infants to spend some time in the sun.

The Ultraviolet Index (UVI)

The Ultraviolet Index (UVI) is an international, scientific measure of the level of ultraviolet radiation (UVR) in the environment. The higher the number the greater the risk of skin damage.

The Cancer Society advises sun protection when the UVI is 3 or higher.

UV Index	Sun Protection
1-2 Green LOW	No protection required
3-5 Yellow MODERATE	Protection required when spending extended periods in the sun, especially if you have fair skin
6-7 Amber HIGH	Protection essential between 10am and 4pm. Slip, slop, slap and wrap.
8-10 Red VERY HIGH	Seek shade between 10am and 4pm. Slip, slop, slap and wrap. Cover up. Reapply sunscreen regularly.
11+ Purple EXTREME	Reschedule outdoor activities for early morning and evening. Full protection essential.

Check out the Sun Protection Alert on the Met Service website: www.metservice.com or in weather section of your daily newspaper. The Sun Protection Alert includes local real time advice.

You are welcome to print and distribute this information sheet!