



YOUR BABY AND THE SUN

Before you take your infant to the park, beach, or even into the backyard, please read this patient information.

Balmy, bright days are wonderful—the sun feels warm on your skin. But what feels pleasant can be very harmful to you, your family, and especially your child.

A baby can't tell you when he or she is too hot or beginning to sunburn. Your baby can't move out of the sun and into the shade without your assistance. Thinner and more sensitive than an adult's, a baby's skin will sunburn very easily. Even babies with naturally darker skin need protection.

Most of our sun exposure—between 60% and 80%—happens before we turn 18 years of age. That's because children spend more time outdoors than most adults, especially in the summer.

Sunburns are painful and can cause fever and dehydration. Too many sunburns and too much sun exposure over the years can cause not only wrinkles and possibly cataracts of the eye, but also skin cancer or adolescent increase the danger of developing skin cancer later in life.

Protecting you baby

Follow these simple rules to protect your baby from sunburns today and skin cancer later in life:

- Babies under six months of age should be kept out of the direct sunlight. Move your baby to the shade or under a tree, umbrella, or the stroller canopy.
 - Dress your baby in clothing that covers the body, such as comfortable, lightweight long pants, long-sleeved shirts, and hats with brims that shade the face and cover the ears. When using a cap with a bill, make sure the bill is facing forward to shield the baby's face.
 - Child-sized sunglasses with UV protection are also a good idea for protecting your child's eyes.
 - Select clothes made of tightly woven fabrics. Clothes that have a tighter weave generally protect better than clothes with a broader weave. If you're not certain how tight a fabric's weave is, hold the clothing up to a lamp or window and see how much light shines through. The less light, the better. Clothing made of cotton is both cool and protective.
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Sunscreens and your baby

- Sunscreen may be used after baby is six months old.
- Choose a sunscreen made for children and put it on your child 30 minutes before going outdoors. Apply carefully around the eyes, avoiding the eyelids. If your baby cries or complains that the sunscreen burns his or her eyes, try a different brand or try a sunscreen stick or sunblock with titanium dioxide or zinc oxide. If a rash develops, ask your baby's health care provider for another suggestion.
- When choosing a sunscreen, look for the words "broad-spectrum" on the label—it means that the sunscreen will screen out both ultraviolet B (UVB) and ultraviolet A (UVA) rays. The sun protection factor (SPF) should be at least 30.
- Choose a water-resistant or waterproof sunscreen. Sunscreens that are "waterproof" should be reapplied every 2 hours, especially if your baby is playing in the water. Zinc oxide, a very effective sunblock, can be used as extra protection on the nose, cheeks, tops of ears, and on the shoulders.

Set a good example

Make sun protection a regular family routine. Your baby needs you for protection from the sun and sunburns. Since babies learn by imitation, you can be the best teacher by practicing sun protection yourself.

Remember these facts about the sun's rays

- The sun's rays are the strongest between 10:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. Try to keep your baby out of the sun during those hours.
- The sun's damaging UV rays can bounce back from sand, snow, or concrete so be particularly careful in these areas.
- Most of the sun's rays can come through the clouds on an overcast day so use sun protection, even on cloudy days.

Have fun in the sun but keep your baby safe.