

Colorado Kids Sun Care Program Vol. 3, No. 1, April, 2007

Skin Cancer, Shade and Your Child

What you should know about recent trends in skin cancer

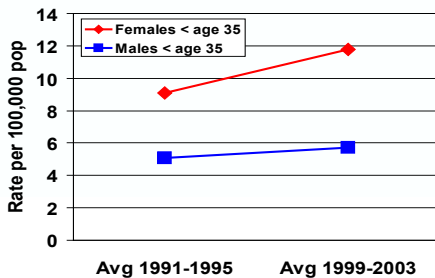
Melanoma, the most serious kind of skin cancer, is becoming more common among younger people.



Melanoma

In Colorado, melanoma rates among females under the age of 35 increased 30% between the period 1991-1995 and 1999-2003. Rates among males under age 35 increased 12% during the same time period (see graph).

Melanoma Incidence among Males and Females Under Age 35 in Colorado: 1991-1995 and 1999-2003



Melanoma is now the second most common form of cancer among 15-29 year olds. Rates in Colorado are higher than the U.S. as a whole.



Scientists believe that the increase in skin cancer among young adults is due to greater exposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation during childhood. That exposure comes from the sun and from indoor tanning beds and sunlamps.

What can be done to reduce your child's risk for skin cancer?

- Your child should limit time outside between **10 a.m. & 4 p.m.**
- When outdoors, encourage your child to:
 - Cover up with a hat, a long-sleeved shirt, and long pants made of light-weight fabric
 - Play in the shade as much as possible
 - Thickly apply sunscreen with SPF 15 or higher to all exposed skin
 - Wear sunglasses with 100% UV protection

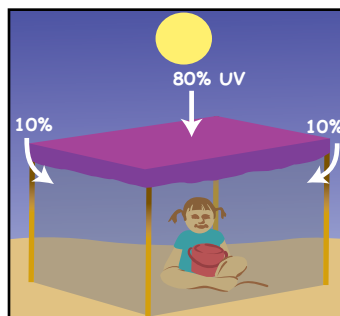
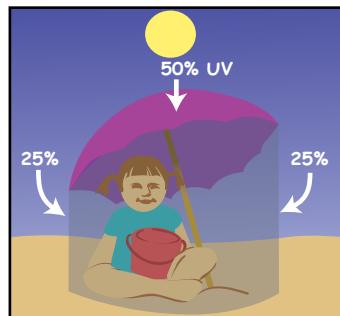
Shade, an important part of the sun protection package

- The best sun protection for your child requires using not just one, but a variety of sun protection strategies. These should include a combination of: clothing and hats, limiting time outside between 10:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m., **shade** and sunscreen.
- While shade by itself doesn't provide 100% protection against ultraviolet (UV) radiation, it can reduce UV rays by **50% or more**, depending on the extent of the shade.
- The great thing about shade is that it protects everyone in the community! All of the other sun protection strategies require planning, effort, and sometimes cost, but shade is free and effortless!



How to maximize the potential of shade

- About 50% of UV light comes in a direct path from the sun and can be blocked out by a small amount of shade, as shown in the umbrella picture at the right.
- The other 50% of UV light comes from rays that are scattered in the sky. If you are under shade that blocks your ability to see blue sky, you are getting nearly 100% UV protection. **The more blue sky you can see, the more UV rays are getting to you.**
- To get more protection from shade, you should move farther into the shaded area.** For example, under a tree you should move closer to the trunk. Under a shade structure, you should move toward the center of the structure, as shown in the shade structure picture at the right.
- Trees are an excellent source of natural shade. A dense, leafy tree with a broad canopy is best for sun protection. A grove of dense leafy trees is better than one tree. **You can eliminate almost all UV exposure during the summer noon hour by staying in a grove of trees.**
- Your child should still use other types of sun protection such as a wide-brimmed hat, long clothing, and sunscreen. It's hard to keep an active child in the shade, and these other measures will allow your child to move about freely.



Celebrate Arbor Day in Colorado

- Arbor Day is a national celebration of trees. On the first Arbor Day in 1872, more than one million trees were planted. The national Arbor Day is always April 27th. In Colorado, we celebrate Arbor Day on the 3rd Friday in April.



- There are lots of fun things you can do with your child to celebrate Arbor Day and learn about trees and their benefits.**

- Consider a family project to plant a shade tree in your yard. A shade tree will increase sun protection for your family and it will add beauty and energy-efficiency to your home. You can get information about selecting, planting, and maintaining a tree from the Colorado State University Cooperative Extension. Call 720-913-5278 or go to www.ext.colostate.edu.
- Talk to your child about how trees remove carbon dioxide from the air and add oxygen back in. You can learn more about this by going to www.wikipedia.org and searching on "trees."
- Plant the American Elm seeds that came in your child's "Tree in a Box." Read the booklet together to learn about the history of trees, tree myths and the value that trees add to our world.
- Volunteer with your child to plant trees in your community. Many communities have tree planting programs, and they could really use YOUR help. Talk to your child about the importance of being a volunteer, and how it helps everyone, not just your family.
- Take your child to an Arbor Day event. Many cities and towns across Colorado will be sponsoring Arbor Day Events. Go to www.arborday.org/arborday/colorado or call the National Arbor Day Foundation at 1-888-448-7337.

No trees? No problem...

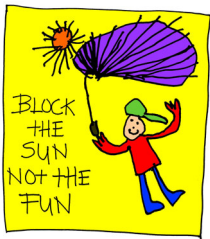
- If you can't shade your home with trees, or if there aren't enough trees where your child plays, consider buying or building an artificial shade structure.
- Shade structures are a great option when natural shade is not available. They come in many different shapes and sizes, and they also block out wind, rain and other weather.



- Like trees, shade structures should be large enough to block out large amounts of the sky.
- Darker colored structures are best. They block out more UV radiation than lighter colored structures.
- If your family is always on the go, consider a portable shade structure. They are easy to take along on a picnic, an outdoors sporting event or a camping trip. Prices range from \$60 - \$200. Ask for sun shades, sun shelters or shade sails at your local sporting goods store.



- On the internet, google "shade structures" to learn more about shade structure companies and products.



Vacations and Sun Protection



Playing it safe when playing outside

Sun protection is even more important when your family is on vacation or an outing. Whether you are skiing in the mountains, swimming at the beach, or having fun at your local water park, your child is likely to get more sun exposure than normal. This is true even for day trips or afternoon excursions.

So, don't stop your normal sun protection routine just because you are away from home. You will probably even need to increase it!

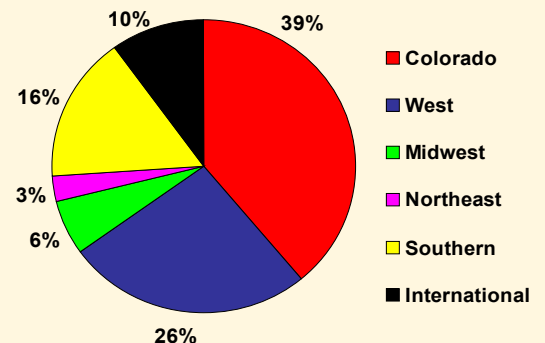
Sun protection away from home

- ✧ **Wherever your family goes for fun, you can reduce your child's risk for skin cancer by packing along a sun protection toolbag.** Always carry it with you, even if you don't plan on being in the sun. You never know when you might need it!
- ✧ Your toolbag should include a wide-brimmed **hat**, a lightweight long-sleeve **shirt** and long **pants**, a **swim shirt** for the beach or pool, **sunglasses** with 100% ultraviolet (UV) protection and **sunscreen** with SPF 15 or higher.
- ✧ **Work with your child to create his or her own sun protection backpack.** It should include everything in your toolbag. Encourage your child to take it along when going to the pool, on school field trips, to camp, or on outings with other families.
- ✧ **Whenever possible, plan your outings for before 10:00 a.m. or after 4:00 p.m.** UV radiation is strongest between those hours. Use your time at mid-day to have a leisurely lunch, go shopping, or do indoor sightseeing.
- ✧ **Proper sun protection at the beach, outdoor pool, or water park is a must for your child!** Research shows that children develop about 3 new moles after every beach vacation they take. Having more moles increases the risk of skin cancer. This can really add up over your child's lifetime!
- ✧ **Over-exposure to the sun is also a concern on trips to the mountains.** Your child can get as much as 40-70% more of the sun's dangerous UV rays at high altitude compared to sea level. Your child will need all of the tools in his or her sun protection backpack when away in the mountains.



Where do Coloradans go on vacation? Feedback from the "Colorado Kids Sun Care Program"

Have you ever wondered where other Colorado families go on vacation? The "Colorado Kids Sun Care Program" survey asks participants where they went on vacation in the last year. Here's what they told us.



Among families who took the survey:

- 39% went somewhere within Colorado (of those, almost all went to the mountains)
- 26% traveled to a western state (e.g., Wyoming, Utah, California)
- 16% visited a southern state (of those, 35% went to Disneyworld in Orlando, Florida)
- 10% vacationed outside of the U.S. (of those, 63% went to Mexico)
- 6% went to a mid-western state (e.g., Ohio, Minnesota)
- 3% traveled to a state in the Northeast or Mid-Atlantic (e.g., Maine, New York)

Sunscreen is PART of good sun protection

at home and away from home

- Sunscreen should be one of five sun protection strategies that you use. The other four are: (1) limiting time in the sun between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., (2) wearing clothing and hats, (3) staying in the shade, and (4) wearing sunglasses.
- Used by itself, sunscreen has the following problems:
 - » When people use sunscreen, they usually don't use it properly. See the bottom section of this page for how to use sunscreen properly. When sunscreen is not used properly, it may prevent sunburns, but it may not prevent skin damage that results in skin cancer.
 - » When people use sunscreen, they often stay outside longer than they should. Your child should not stay outside longer just because he or she is using sunscreen and is not getting a sunburn.
- To avoid these problems, always use sunscreen in combination with other sun protection strategies, and be sure to use it properly!
- Here is an example of how combining sun protection strategies is better than using just one: Using sunscreen by itself reduces UV exposure 5-fold. Using a hat by itself reduces UV exposure 5-fold. Using both sunscreen and a hat reduces UV exposure 25-fold!



How to use sunscreen properly

Step 1: Select a sunscreen product with an SPF (Sun Protection Factor) of 15 or higher. The higher the SPF, the more protection you will get. The sunscreen you select should protect against both UVA and UVB rays, and should be either waterproof or water-resistant.

Step 2: Apply sunscreen to your child using these guidelines:

- Thickly apply sunscreen to all exposed body parts 15-30 minutes before going in the sun.
- Use the "One Finger Rule" to judge how much sunscreen you need. Squeeze a strip of sunscreen onto your index finger from where the finger meets the palm to the fingertip. Apply "one finger" to each of the following body areas:

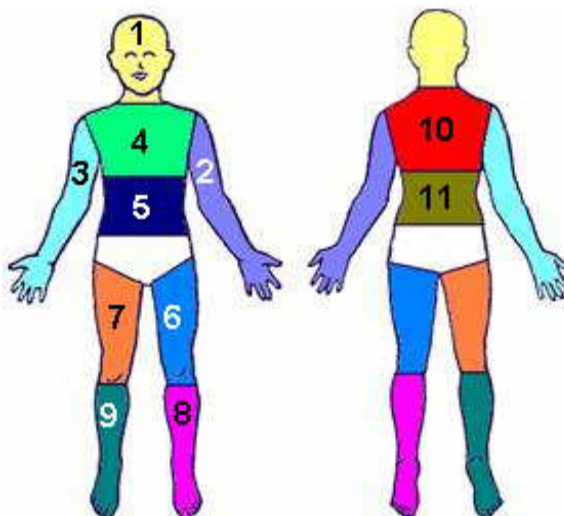


1. Head, neck and face
2. Left arm
3. Right arm
4. Upper front torso
5. Lower front torso
6. Left upper leg and thigh
7. Right upper leg and thigh
8. Left lower leg and foot
9. Right lower leg and foot
10. Upper back
11. Lower back

- Apply a "second coat" of sunscreen 15-30 minutes after your child has been out in the sun, or after the first coat has soaked in. Putting a second coat of sunscreen on is like using a second coat of paint to fully cover a textured wall. Re-apply again every 2 hours, or more often after swimming, towel-drying or sweating.

Step 3: Your child should not stay outside for long periods of time just because he or she is wearing sunscreen.

Step 4: Your child should use sunscreen all year round, even on cloudy days.



Dress your child for sun-success!

- Dressing your child in a wide-brimmed hat (2–3 inches wide) and in tightly woven, lightweight summer clothes that cover the arms and legs is the best form of sun protection that you can use. It is also a lot less expensive than sunscreen.



- If you can't get your child to wear long clothes in the summer, try a short-sleeve shirt and long shorts. The more cover your child gets from clothes, the better protected he or she will be.

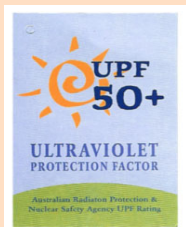
- You probably won't have to look very far to find proper clothes for your child. Go through your child's closet and try sorting summer clothes into those that are good and not so good for sun protection.

✧ Be on the look-out for shirts with sleeves (long sleeves are best) and for longer shorts and pants.



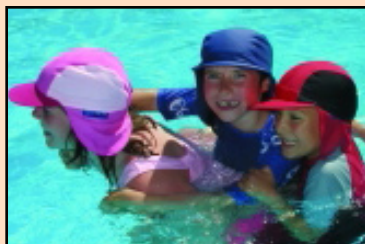
✧ Check for a tight weave by holding the item up to a window or lamp. The less light that gets through, the more protective it will be.

✧ Store the clothes that are more protective in a special drawer. They will be easier for your child to find.

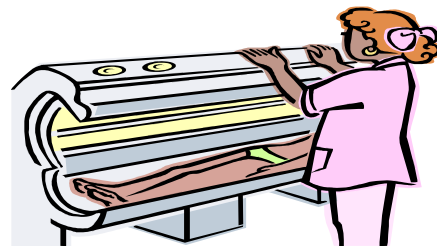


- Everyday clothes can be very good for sun protection. If you want additional protection, you can buy special clothing that is rated with an "ultraviolet protection factor" (UPF). UPF-rated clothes are available in many online

stores that carry sun-protective items. They may also be available in department stores and sporting goods stores.



How much do you know about the dark side of tanning? Take our quiz and test your knowledge.



1. If my child gets a "base tan" before we go on vacation, it will prevent skin damage.

True _____ False _____

2. Tanning beds and sunlamps give off harmful UV radiation, just like the sun.

True _____ False _____

3. Indoor tanning is safer than outdoor tanning.

True _____ False _____

4. Many states are considering laws that would restrict the use of indoor tanning salons by minors.

True _____ False _____

5. If done in moderation, indoor tanning can be safe for my child.

True _____ False _____

TURN TO PAGE 4 FOR THE ANSWERS.



Tanning quiz answers

1. **False.** Tanning is a sign of skin damage. It can increase your child's risk for developing skin cancer later in life. **Many people think that getting a "base tan" before going on vacation reduces skin cancer risk. The truth is, the more UV radiation your child gets, the greater the risk of skin cancer.** Even if your child tans instead of sunburns, he or she is still being exposed to harmful UV rays.



2. **True.** **The sun, tanning beds and sunlamps all give off UV light.** UV light contains two types of rays: UVB and UVA rays. UVB rays cause sunburns. UVA rays affect the deeper layers of skin and cause damage that you can't see.



3. **False.** The tanning industry tries to convince people that using tanning beds and sunlamps is healthy because it prevents sunburns. They claim that tanning beds are safe because they only give off UVA rays. **This is false. Exposure to UVA rays at a tanning salon is very dangerous. UV rays from tanning beds can be 2-10 times stronger than those from the sun. Tanning bed use has been shown to increase a person's risk of skin cancer by at least 50%.**

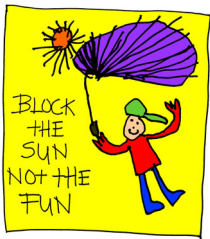
4. **True.** Public health officials are so concerned about the health risks of indoor tanning that they have been working with lawmakers to impose age restrictions on indoor tanning salons. **Twenty five states currently have indoor tanning restrictions for minors. In 2007, 14 states introduced legislation to establish new restrictions or strengthen existing ones.**



5. **False.** Any indoor tanning is harmful and can increase the risk for skin cancer. **As a parent, you can help to protect your child against skin cancer by never giving permission to use a tanning bed or sunlamp.**

"People are being informed that a base tan is a healthy way of preventing sunburns and skin cancer, but there's no logic behind tanning beds. It's like saying you should smoke to prevent lung cancer."

David Leffell, M.D., Yale Professor and Vice President of the Skin Cancer Foundation



SUN PROTECTION HAS MOVED BEYOND SUNSCREEN – HAVE YOU?

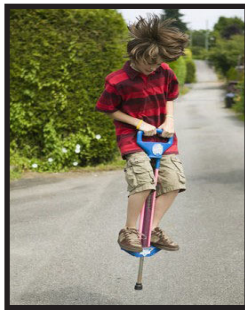
- Experts agree that reducing exposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation is critical to lowering a child's risk for skin cancer later in life.
- The two most effective strategies for reducing your child's exposure are:
 - » Dressing in light-weight clothing with long sleeves, long pants and a hat
 - » Limiting time in the mid-day sun between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.
- Answer the questions below to evaluate your use of these strategies. Turn to the page listed after each question for tips, specially designed for you, on how to improve your child's sun protection.



1. HOW DOES YOUR CHILD DRESS ON A TYPICAL SUMMER DAY?



?



?



?



Go to page 2
to learn more

2. HOW MUCH TIME DOES YOUR CHILD SPEND OUTSIDE BETWEEN 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. ON A TYPICAL SUMMER DAY?

4-6 hours

?

2-3 hours

?

Less than
2 hours

?



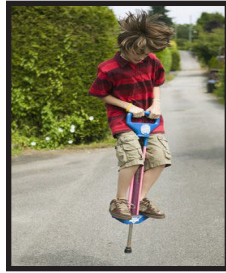
Go to
page 3
to learn
more

If your child dresses like...



Not So Good

or



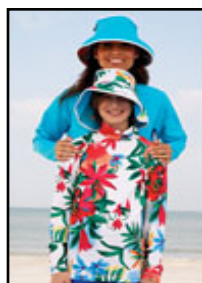
Better

Your child is getting too much sun, which will increase your child's chances of getting skin cancer later in life. **By choosing different clothing, you can protect your child from harmful UV radiation and reduce the risk for skin cancer.**

- Start with small steps!
- **If your child wears tank or halter tops, try short sleeves.** Sunburns on the shoulders are common and can be easily prevented this way.
- **If your child won't wear a hat with a wide brim or flaps, try a baseball cap or visor.** It won't protect the ears or neck, but it will protect the face.
- **If your child wears short shorts, try some shorts that are 2 or 3 inches longer.**



- **Trade in your child's bathing suit for a swim shirt and swim shorts.** Swim shirts and shorts are becoming popular with kids. They last for several seasons and your child will need less sunscreen during swim time.
- **If you can't keep protective clothing on your child for long periods of time, try to at least do it during the very highest UV hours of noon to 2 p.m.**
- **Remind your child that people living in the hottest parts of the world wear hats and long clothing to shade their bodies and stay cool.** Have your child test this out on a hot summer day.
- **Help your child by being a role model.** Wear hats and other sun protective clothing in the summer, especially between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., and encourage your child to follow your lead.



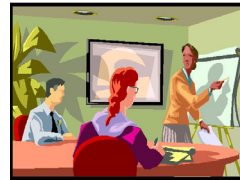
If your child dresses like...



Best

Congratulations! You and your child are well on the way to using one of the most effective forms of sun protection in your toolbag. Keep up the good work! **Can you also help others by trying to improve sun protection policies and practices in your community? Here are some ways to get started.**

- **Share your knowledge and experience with other parents.** Describe how you got your child to wear sun protective clothing, and how you dealt with complaints from your child about being uncomfortable, hot, or different from other kids. Talk about which clothing is best for sun protection, and where you got it.
- **Inquire about sun protection policies at your child's school.** If there are no policies, or if they don't go far enough, suggest some yourself.
- Suggest policies that require students to wear hats and sun protective clothing when outside during school hours. You can find numerous examples on the internet at www.sunsafecolorado.org. Click on "Sun Safety at School" and then "Policy Planning."
 - » Some schools have a "no-hat" policy that prevents children from bringing hats to school. Suggest that this policy be changed to permit hats when students are outside on school grounds.
 - » Encourage school staff to wear hats and sun protective clothing when outside during school hours, so they can set an example for the children.
- **Suggest similar policies at your local pool, rec center, neighborhood park, and summer camp.**



If your child is outside...

4-6 hours
between
10 a.m. and
4 p.m.

or

2-3 hours
between
10 a.m. and
4 p.m.

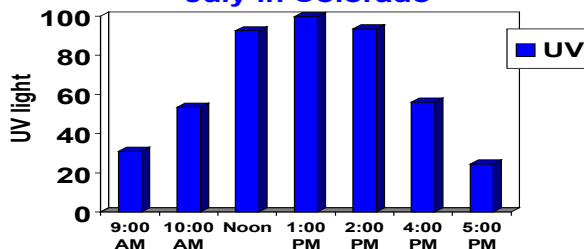
Not So Good

Better

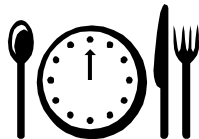
Limiting time outside between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. is an important tool for reducing your child's risk for skin cancer.

- Sunlight contains UV radiation, which is harmful to the skin and can cause skin cancer.
- UV light is strongest between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. It reaches its peak around 1 p.m. on a sunny summer day. **You should limit the time that your child is outside between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., and especially between noon and 2 p.m. when UV is at the highest.**

UV Light on a Sunny Day in July in Colorado



- **Start small to limit your child's time in the mid-day sun.** Cut back just one hour of the time your child spends outside during mid-day. Have your child come inside at noon to eat lunch, or earlier and you can make lunch together.
- **Plan an inside activity for right after lunch.** Read a book together, do an art project, or play a game. Or, visit a library, museum, arcade, or indoor pool.
- **Organize your child's summer schedule so that outdoor activities occur in the earlier part of the morning or in late afternoon.** Late afternoon is the hottest part of the day in Colorado, so a good time to go to the pool is at 4 or 5 p.m.
- **When on vacation, plan indoor sight-seeing and shopping for mid-day.** Visit the zoo, beach, water park or amusement park first thing in the morning or late in the afternoon.
- **Talk to your child about the dangers of mid-day sun.** Encourage your child to limit time outside between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., even when you are not around.



If your child is outside...

Less than 2 hours
between
10 a.m. and 4 p.m.

Best

Congratulations! You are doing a great job of using your sun protection toolbag, so keep it up! Limiting the time that your child spends outside during mid-day is one of the most effective ways of reducing your child's chances of getting skin cancer someday. **Can you go one step further and become an advocate for others?** Here are some ways you can improve sun protection policies and practices in your community.

- **Ask your child's coaches and event leaders to schedule games and other activities for early morning or late afternoon.** Use what you know to educate them about the importance of reducing exposure to the mid-day sun.
- **For activities that can't be rescheduled, ask that they be held in a shaded area or under a shade structure.** Organize a fundraiser selling sun hats so that your child's school or rec center can purchase portable shade structures.



- Evaluate the sun protection policy at your child's summer camp. It should include scheduling outdoor activities for the early morning or late afternoon, and providing shade for mid-day events.
- If your child goes to a water park or public pool, ask management to allow patrons to leave during mid-day and return later without paying an additional admission fee.
- **If your child plays soccer, ask the league to allow children to wear hats while they play.** Work with your team to have a shade structure for the kids to rest under.
- When your child spends the day with a friend, talk to the parents about limiting mid-day sun exposure when your child is with them.



Problems and solutions to fight the sun protection blues

How can I keep a hat on my child?

- The best way to encourage a child to wear a hat is for the child to see people he or she respects wearing hats. Start by wearing a hat yourself!
- Point out pictures of celebrities wearing hats (for example, sports, music and movie stars).
- Give your child choices about what kind of hat he or she will wear. The best hats have a wide brim (2-3 inches) or a flap that covers the ears and neck. But even a baseball cap (which protects only the top of the head and the face) is better than no hat at all.



My child complains when I try to put sunscreen on him. What should I do?

- If your child is in a hurry to get on with his or her activities, don't wait to apply sunscreen. Try putting it on soon after your child gets up in the morning.
- If sunscreen stings your child's eyes, try using a sunscreen stick. Many parents and children prefer sunscreen sticks for the face and spray-on sunscreen for the rest of the body.
- You can also give your child a choice of wearing sunscreen or wearing more clothing and a hat. Be sure to put sunscreen on any exposed skin, which might only be his or her face.

What can I do to make sure my child is protected from the sun when she is at school?

- In general, your child will be O.K. outside for up to 15 minutes without sun protection. For children with very sun-sensitive skin, even 15 minutes may be too much.
- Usually, if you apply a thick coat of sunscreen (SPF 15+) to all exposed skin before your child goes to school in the morning, this will be enough protection for the school day. If your child sweats heavily, there may be a need for your child to re-apply sunscreen before going outside for recess.
- Check with your school about whether your child is allowed to carry and put on sunscreen. If this is not allowed, ask the school for suggestions on how to protect your child.



I heard that a mother was arrested when her children got severe sunburns. Is that true?

- It is true. A few years ago, a mother was jailed for 8 days when her children got severe sunburns after spending all day at a county fair with no sun protection. Allowing a child to get a **severe** sunburn is considered neglect by many child welfare agencies.

Personal Story



A mother of two from Denver:

"I was five months pregnant with my first child when I went to the doctor for a mole check. While the news of melanoma was shocking at the age of 30, it was a blessing in some ways. I was able to change my behavior and teach my children healthy sun practices from the start. Fun wide-brim hats, sunscreen, sunglasses, and sun-protective bathing clothes have been key to our approach. We are a very active family, but we save our outside fun for early morning and late afternoon. My hope is that with greater awareness, my children will be safer and healthier in the long-term. Colorado is a tough place to live when you are blonde, blue-eyed and fair-skinned. My children get that. They are completely willing to put on their hats, sunscreen, and sunglasses. My kids have had almost zero sunburns and suntans. They are healthy and happy kids, and they know all about trails and parks that are shaded with dense trees."

This is the last newsletter from the Colorado Kids Sun Care Program. As a parent, you can lower your child's chances of getting skin cancer someday by remembering to use everything in your sun protection toolbag.

- Limit time in the sun between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.
- Cover up with a hat, long sleeved shirt and long pants
- Thickly apply sunscreen with an SPF of 15 or higher
- Stay in the shade
- Wear 100% UV protective sunglasses

