

SUN PROTECTION

Children with Ectodermal Dysplasia who do not sweat properly must be kept cool in summer. In addition they need to be protected from the sun's radiation just like any other child. This leaflet is about sun protection and applies to all children, not just those with Ectodermal Dysplasia.

All of us need sun protection all year round. A tan, whether it's from the sun or a tanning salon, represents sun damage to the skin. This damage is cumulative over a lifetime - therefore, the more sun exposure and tanning, the greater the risk of skin cancer and early aging changes. Up to 80% of sun exposure occurs during the first 18 years of life. Childhood sunburns take their toll later in life. Studies have shown that the regular use of a sunscreen with an SPF of 15 reduces the risk of some types of skin cancer by 78%.

Children should be taught to use sun protection beginning in infancy. Infants should always be covered with adequate clothing and a hat. Sunscreens can be applied from after 4 months of age. Beach umbrellas, hats and long-sleeved shirts are also helpful. The Met Office now issues a daily UV index that predicts the midday intensity of ultraviolet radiation from the sun, which offers a useful guideline so you can plan your outdoor activities. See www.metoffice.gov.uk

How does one pick a sunscreen? Sunscreens should have a minimum sun protection factor (SPF) of 20 and contain both UVB and UVA absorbing chemicals (check the label). (An SPF of 20 means that you can stay out in the sun 20 times longer before getting burned than you could without wearing the sunscreen). Recently the advice has been to only use very high factor sunscreens such as 50+, particularly on children. The sunscreen should be water-resistant for at least 2 hours. For infants and children, a moisturizing vehicle is preferred. Some sunscreens have UVA-reflecting and scattering materials, such as titanium dioxide or zinc oxide in the form of small particles which are quite effective and block a significant percentage of ultraviolet radiation. For individuals who have irritation from or an allergy to commonly used chemical sunscreens, these sunblocks with an inert, micronized particle, (titanium dioxide) are well tolerated. Always test the sunscreen on a small patch of your child's skin before using it all over the body. Some sunscreens are made especially for very young children and do not burn or sting when applied or if accidentally rubbed in the eyes. Sunscreen needs to be applied in a thick layer, at least 1/2 hour before going out in the sun. This gives the sunscreen a chance to penetrate the skin, which it must do in order to be effective. Remember to protect the lips. Several lip balms also contain sunscreen. Reapplying sunscreen every two hours will insure that the child does not get burned. Apply more often if swimming or sweating profusely.

In addition to using a sunscreen, children also need to learn risk-reducing behaviours. As the sun is most harmful between the hours of 10:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m., outdoor exposure without shade should be minimized during that time period. The addition of protective clothing is also helpful.

So remember:

- 1 Avoid tanning deliberately.
- 2 Seek the shade whenever possible.
- 3 Minimize sun exposure between the hours of 10:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m.
- 4 Always wear a sunscreen or sunblock with an SPF of at least 20, 50+ on children.
- 5 Apply the sunscreen at least half an hour before going outside.
- 6 Add protective clothing and hats whenever possible.

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