

Sun Safety Q & A

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Q. What strength sunscreen should I use?

A. The American Academy of Dermatology (AAD) currently recommends at least SPF 30. To get the SPF amount that the bottle says, one needs to use the sunscreen as it was applied in the laboratory: a tablespoon for the face and a shot glass for the average adult body. That means enough to look white and pasty. Since no one does this, most people only get about one-third of the SPF rating. If this sounds like you, consider a higher SPF. Be sure to choose a "broad-spectrum" product that blocks both UVA and UVB rays.

Q. What sunscreen is safe for babies and sensitive children?

A. The AAD recommends avoiding sunscreen until 6 months old, but I personally use it sparingly. Just dress baby from head to toe with UPF clothing, then dab a bit on cheeks and hands. Babies and people with allergies should avoid chemicals like benzophenone and oxybenzone. Instead, choose a sunscreen with physical blockers, like titanium and zinc.



Q. What do the new FDA water labels mean?

A. Water resistant means your sunscreen should be effective in water up to 40 minutes. Very water resistant means 80 minutes. Regardless, sunscreen should be reapplied as soon as you get out of the water.

Q. How can I protect my child while they are at school?

A. The easiest is to apply sunscreen just before you drop your child off at school. But you can also send your child with a sunscreen stick and sun hat. Ideally this is a daily habit. Even when clouds block visible light, UV rays penetrate fog and glass. If you return the permission slip enclosed, the Children's School will do their best to help protect your child, too!



Q. Any other advice for children?

A. Experiment with different types of sunscreen vehicles. Most children don't like certain textures. Your favorite sunscreen may say organic, but feel grainy. Our children enjoy applying their own sunscreen from a stick. It looks like a giant lipstick tube. Here are some companies with children's UPF clothing: Coolibar, UV Skinz, iPlay, L.L. Bean, Cabana Life, Janie & Jack, and Target. Babiators has sunglasses. Oh - another note, some spray sunscreens are flammable! Watch out for nearby grills, candles, and cigarettes. *(Note from the Children's School: NAEYC criteria 5.A.07.b discourages the use of aerosol sunscreen.)*