

Ask CDC

Soak Up the Sun

[Announcer] This podcast is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC – safer, healthier people.

Welcome to *Ask CDC*, the weekly podcast that answers *your* questions. I'm your host, Susan Laird.

Our question this week is from a mom who is concerned about skin cancer because her kids spend so much time outdoors during the summer.

You should be concerned about skin cancer. It appears that exposure to the sun's ultraviolet, or UV, rays is the most important environmental factor involved with developing skin cancer and does tend to be greater during the summer months.

The two most common types of skin cancer, basal cell and squamous cell carcinoma, are highly curable. However, melanoma, the third most common type of skin cancer, is more dangerous, especially among young people. Between 65 and 90 percent of melanomas are caused by exposure to UV light in sunlight.

People with certain risk factors are more likely than others to develop skin cancer. Risk factors vary for different types of skin cancer, but some general risk factors are having:

- A lighter natural skin color;
- A family or personal history of skin cancer;
- Exposure to the sun through work and play;
- A history of sunburns early in life;
- Skin that burns, freckles, reddens easily, or becomes painful in the sun;
- Blue or green eyes;
- Blond or red hair; and
- Certain types and a large number of moles.

The best way to prevent skin cancer is to protect yourself from the sun. When used consistently, sun-protection practices can reduce your risk of getting skin cancer. There are lots of ways to protect your child's skin all year long. Here are five tips you can try.

1. **Hide and Seek.** UV rays are strongest and most harmful during midday, so it's best to plan indoor activities then. If this is not possible, seek shade under a tree, an umbrella or a pop-up tent. Use these options to prevent sunburn, not to seek relief after it's happened.
2. **Cover 'em Up.** Clothing that covers your child's skin helps protect against UV rays. Although a long-sleeved shirt and long pants with a tight weave are best, they aren't always practical. A t-shirt, long shorts, or a beach cover-up are good choices, too, but it's wise to double up on protection by applying sunscreen or keeping your child in the shade when possible.

3. Get a Hat. Hats that shade the face, scalp, ears, and neck are easy to use and give great protection. Baseball caps are popular among kids but they don't protect their ears and neck. If your child wears a cap, be sure to protect exposed areas with sunscreen.
4. Shades Are Cool. And they protect your child's eyes from UV rays, which can lead to cataracts later in life. Look for sunglasses that wrap around and block as close to 100% of both UVA and UVB rays as possible.
5. Rub on Sunscreen. Use sunscreen with at least SPF 15 and UVA/UVB protection every time your child goes outside.

Just a few serious sunburns can increase your child's risk of skin cancer later in life. If your child's skin looks a little pink today, it may be burned tomorrow morning. To prevent further burning, get your child out of the sun. Help your children play it safe in the sun and protect your own skin as well. You're an important role model.

Tanning beds and sunlamps emit ultraviolet rays that are as dangerous as those from the sun and should be avoided.

Following these simple recommendations can help protect you and your family from the harmful effects of the sun.

For more information, visit www.cdc.gov/cancer or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.

Thanks for listening. To submit *your* question to *Ask CDC*, email us at askcdc@cdc.gov.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO, 24/7.