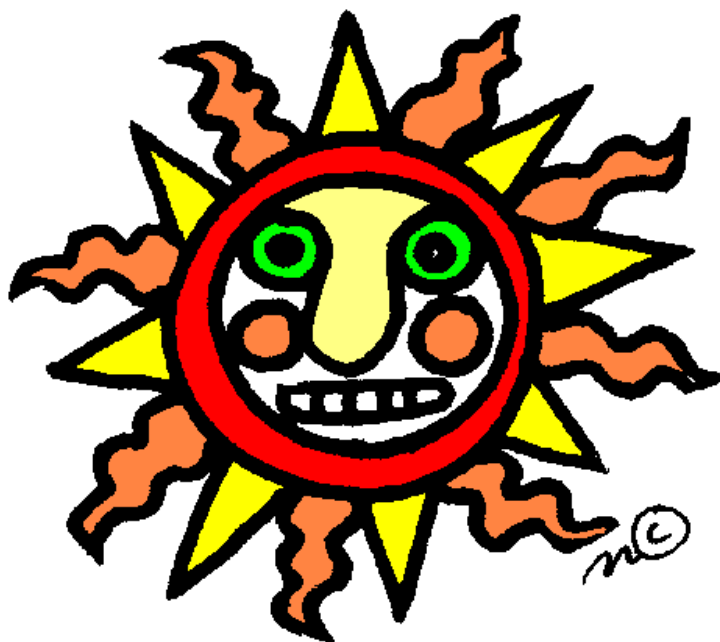


SunSafe in the Middle School Years



School Policy Manual



Project Background

SunSafe in the Middle School Years was a research project aimed at improving sun protection in middle school students. Funded by the National Cancer Institute and directed by pediatrician, Ardis Olson, M.D., the project worked in 10 communities in VT and NH. Since reducing sun exposure may prevent 90% of skin cancers, the SunSafe Project worked with schools, coaches, town recreation programs, parents, and health care providers to improve middle school students' sun protection behaviors.

Middle school is an important time to work with adolescents since they are beginning to establish their own health habits. However, they still willing to listen to adult's advise and they are still influenced by the role model set by parents, teachers and coaches.

Why middle school students?

- Only 35% of middle school students protect themselves from sun damage
- 75% of teens had sunburns in the previous summer
- 1 or more blistering sunburns before age 20 doubles the risk of melanoma
- Young teens start to use artificial tanning lights
- Children this age start taking responsibility for their health and establish lifetime habits

Why Schools?

- Adolescents spend majority of time at school and in school sponsored activities
- Physical education classes, outings, and sports sponsored by schools are conducted outdoors, exposing teens to UV radiation.
- Health, science and other curriculum offer opportunities to educate youth about harm from UV radiation and skin cancer.
- Teachers and school personnel need protection from UV radiation while participating in school sponsored events or classes.
- Students and school staff can benefit from this aspect of health education.

The following recommendations are from the *Guidelines for School Programs To Prevent Skin Cancer*. This report was prepared for publication by the National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion and can be seen in its entirety at

<http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/rr5104a1.htm>

- ✓ Establish policies that reduce exposure of students and staff to UV radiation.
- ✓ Provide an environment that supports sun-safety practices.
- ➔ Provide health education to teach students the knowledge, attitudes and behavioral skills they need to prevent skin cancer.
- ✓ Involve family members in skin cancer prevention efforts
- ✓ Include skin cancer prevention with professional development of staff
- ✓ Complement and support skin cancer prevention with school health services

***Children spend almost 3 times
as much time outside as do adults -
Much of our lifetime sun exposure by age 18***

Schools that participated in the study found one effective and simple method of promoting sun safety was to include sun protection language on permission slips for outings and athletics. Some samples are below.

- Unprotected exposure to the sun in childhood and adolescence significantly increases the risk of developing skin cancer in later life. Exposure at any stage of life can add to the risk of cancer. The ----- School is committed to reducing exposure of staff and students to the sun's harmful UV rays, thus reducing the lifetime risk of skin cancer.
- Unless parental consent has been given a staff member will not apply sunscreen to any student. Where the student is capable of applying their own sunscreen they will be encouraged to do so. The school is not responsible for any sunburns suffered by students.
- All students are encouraged to protect themselves from UV damage by using appropriate protective measures including, clothing, sunscreen, sunglasses and hats.
- Always wear sunscreen, a hat and sunglasses when playing outside. Our New England sunshine is very strong. And even though you may have put sunscreen on in the morning, you still need to reapply it during the day.

Additional School Sun-Safety Policy Development Resources

- *Guidelines for School Programs To Prevent Skin Cancer*. Prepared by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Printed in the MMWR 2002;51(No. RR-4). April 26, 2002.

Download free at www.cdc.gov/mmwr/pdf/rr/rr5104.pdf.

- *Sun Safety for Kids* To counter the skin cancer epidemic, Sun Safety for Kids provides information for school and summer camp administrators to use in developing sun safety programs for the purpose of protecting children from the cancer-causing effects of sun exposure. Dermatologists of The Los Angeles Metropolitan Dermatological Society are alarmed by the epidemic of skin cancer in this country and developed this resource <http://www.sunsafetyforkids.org/index.html>

- *Fit, Healthy, and Ready to Learn: Part II: Policies to Promote Sun Safety and Prevent Skin*

Cancer. Prepared by the National Association of State Boards of Education. November 2002. The entire document can be purchased for \$16.50 by calling (800) 220-5183 or ordering online at www.nasbe.org/catalog.html. Note: The sample policy language can be downloaded free of charge at www.nasbe.org/healthyschools/sun_safety.html.

- *Sunny Days Healthy Ways Sun-Safe School Guide*. Prepared by Klein Buendel. 2002.

Download free at www.sdhw.info/pdfs/schoolguide02.pdf.

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