

Fun and the Sun: What Parents Need to Know



An outdoor lifestyle and summer sun exposure in northern New England puts us at increased risk for developing skin cancer. Promoting sun protection is an essential but often overlooked part of encouraging healthy behaviors in young people.

Children's skin is more sensitive to sun exposure than adults' skin. A child can develop a **sunburn in less than 10 minutes** on days with a high UV index. Children should not go out into the sun without protection. In New England, the sun can burn our skin even on cool spring and fall days. The intensity of the sun's rays varies by season - increasing in May and remaining high through September.

Middle school is a time of transition when youth begin making their own health decisions. Once youth start high school, it is harder to change their health behaviors.

Parents, you are important role models. The information you provide to your children helps shape their health behaviors – they learn from what you tell them and what they see you do. By adopting sun safe behaviors, you can reduce your risk for skin cancer and your child's risk of developing skin cancer!

Skin Cancer Facts

- Skin cancer rates in New Hampshire have tripled in the past twenty years.
- Vermont has one of the nation's highest death rates from melanoma.
- 90% of skin cancer can be attributed to sun exposure, and we get about 80% of our total lifetime sun exposure by the time we are 18.
- One blistering sunburn during childhood doubles the risk of skin cancer later in life.

We recommend that you and your family:

- Check the UV Forecast and avoid the sun's rays during the highest intensity times. When that is not feasible, we recommend that you cover up, use good sunscreen, apply the sunscreen often, and seek shade.
- Encourage schools and recreation programs to plan for shaded areas on playing fields to help reduce the amount of time youth are in the sun.
- Do not use tanning booths or other artificial lights for tanning.
- *Examine your skin regularly.* If you notice new, different, or peculiar moles on your skin, contact a physician IMMEDIATELY.

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Sun Safe Behaviors for You and Your Family

Cover Up

Wear clothing that covers your skin. Such as:

- Long sleeve shirts.
- Long pants.
- Hats. Wide-brimmed hats are best. They protect the neck, ears, eyes, forehead, nose, and scalp.
- Sunglasses that block 99 - 100% of UVA and UVB rays.

Use Good Sunscreen and Apply Often

Use a broad-spectrum sunscreen with a Sun Protection Factor (SPF) of at least 15.

- Apply sunscreen liberally, 20-30 minutes before going outside.
- **Reapply sunscreen every 2 hours.** All sunscreen - even waterproof sunscreen- should be reapplied every 2 hours. If you swim, sweat, or towel dry your skin, sunscreen should be reapplied more frequently. The active ingredients in sunscreen wear out in 2 hours.
- Don't forget to apply sunscreen to lips, ears, feet, hands, bald spots, and the back of your neck.

Seek Shade

Reduce UV radiation by taking shelter under a tree, umbrella, or another shaded spot, especially when the radiation from the sun is most intense. The intensity of the sun's rays varies by:

- Time of day. The sun's rays are the most intense between 10 am and 4pm.
- Time of the year.
- Elevation (UV intensity generally increases with altitude).
- Reflection off surfaces (such as water or snow).
- Cloud cover.

Check the UV Forecast

The UV gives the expected UV radiation reaching Earth's surface on a scale of 1 to 10+. The higher the number, the greater the exposure to UV radiation, and the greater the need to protect your skin.

The UV forecast can be found online at <https://weather.com>

Index Number	Exposure Level	Minutes to Skin Damage
0-2	Minimal	>60
3-4	Low	30-40
5-6	Moderate	20-30
7-9	High	10-20