

Primary Schools

news bulletin

WINTER 2006



Skin protection during winter – a common sense approach

The Cancer Council South Australia has been receiving many enquiries about skin protection during the winter months and issues around Vitamin D. There is not one simple answer to this and factors such as skin type are important considerations to keep in mind. In South Australia it is recommended that schools implement a comprehensive skin protection policy when the ultraviolet radiation (UVR) levels are 3 and above. In South Australia this is generally from the beginning of September until the end of April.

During May to August in South Australia the UV radiation levels generally fall below the UV Index of 3 so skin protection is not necessary for most people. Clear days in early May and late August can still mean UV radiation levels reach 3 and above so skin protection is recommended. On days when the UV radiation levels are below 3 skin protection is still important if children are going to be outside for prolonged periods of time – ie sports days, excursions etc, particularly for those children (and adults) who have very fair skin that burns easily.

During a normal school day from May to August, where children are outside for short periods of time – ie lunchtime or recess – and the UV radiation level is below 3, the chances of skin damage from the sun for most people, is low. Children with very fair skin are still encouraged to make skin protection a part of their daily routine.

Many schools choose an all year round skin protection policy because it is easier to implement and manage. These policies include the wearing of hats all year. As hat wearing for sun protection is not necessary at times when the UV level is below 3, many schools are now allowing warm hats, such as beanies, to be worn during the winter months to ensure students don't get out of the habit of wearing a hat.

Some schools have their policy in place during 1st and 4th Terms only. The Cancer Council recommends these policies are extended to include the months of September and April to protect students from the higher UV radiation levels.

It is important for children to understand that skin protection is necessary, particularly at certain times of the year. They also need to learn that sensible sun exposure, especially during the winter months, has health benefits as well. Children should learn about their own skin type – particularly those with very fair skin, which burns easily – and the importance of skin cancer prevention. Children with dark skin still need to protect themselves from the sun during the higher UVR times of the year as they can still sustain accumulated skin damage.

For most people to maintain sufficient Vitamin D levels, exposing the hands, face and arms to 10 minutes of sunlight before 10am or after 3pm from September to April and 2-3 hours of sunlight exposure on the face, hands and arms from May to August.

For those groups in the community who are at increased risk of Vitamin D deficiency – ie the elderly, babies of Vitamin D deficient mothers, people who are house bound, work long hours indoors, are in institutional care or dark skinned people, particularly those who cover their skin for religious or cultural reasons - should discuss their Vitamin D status with their medical practitioner.

In summary for South Australia

- A comprehensive school skin protection policy should be in place and actively implemented from the 1st September until the end of April and when the ultraviolet radiation levels are 3 and above outside of these times.
- It is a school decision to continue to implement their policy through the winter months when UV levels are low.
- Care should still be taken from May to August if planning to be outside for an extended period of time on a clear sunny day (eg: a sports day).
- People with very fair skin that burns easily should always take care to protect themselves from the sun.
- If there is a concern about Vitamin D deficiency seek medical advice.

Further information can be found at www.sunsmart.org.au or The Cancer Council Australia website on www.cancer.org.au.

South Australian specific ultraviolet radiation level information can be found at www.bom.gov.au/products/IDY05214.shtml.

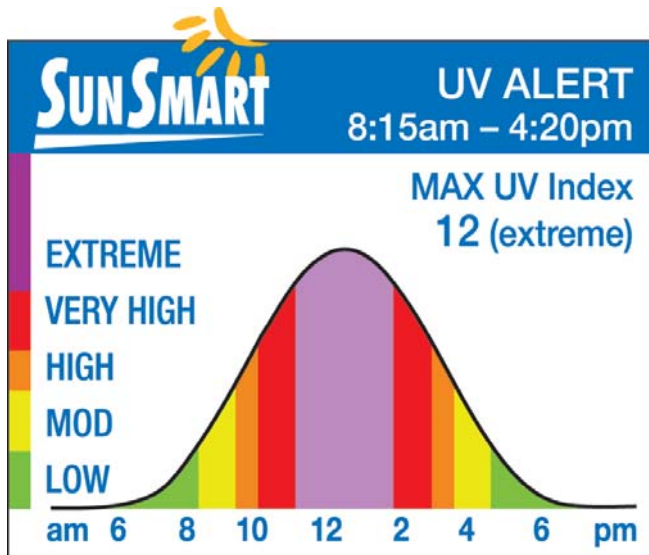
The Bureau of Meteorology website is www.bom.gov.au/products/uvindex_national.shtml.

and the Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency (ARPANZA) www.arpanza.gov.au/uvindex/daily/ausuvindex.htm.

UV Index

The Bureau of Meteorology forecast the UV Index daily. The UV Index, adapted from the World Health Organisation's Global UV Index, provides a measure of solar UV radiation at the earth's surface. The values of the Index range from zero upward and the higher the Index value, the greater the potential for damage to your skin.

On days when the UV Index is forecast to reach 3 or above, the Bureau of Meteorology will issue the *SunSmart UV Alert* stating the times the UV will be at 3 and above during the day, the times when skin protection is most important. Currently the *SunSmart UV Alert* appears daily in The Advertiser and Sunday Mail. A good teaching tool is the Bureau of Meteorology Website, where students can track the UV levels and see that they start to increase from around the middle of August in South Australia.



Issued by the Bureau of Meteorology

School canteens

School canteens play an important role in helping children to eat a variety of healthy foods throughout their school week. With the introduction of the DECS healthy eating guidelines earlier this year, many schools are reviewing what their canteens offer and are changing menus to provide healthier options. Below are some useful websites in relation to healthier school canteens: -

www.healthyactive.gov.au

www.healthy-kids.com.au

www.freshforkids.com.au

www.waschoolcanteens.org.au

www.chdf.org.au

www.health.qld.gov.au/ActiveAte/default.asp

www.healthpromotion.com.au

www.fruitnvegweek.health.wa.gov.au/canteen/canteen.asp



The Parents Jury – an online network for parents and caregivers

Have you heard about the Parent's Jury? Here is some important information that you can pass on to your school community, particularly to those parents who are interested in the health benefits of good nutrition and regular physical activity.

The Parents Jury is a web-based network of parents who wish to improve the food and physical activity environments for children in Australia. It is a forum for parents to voice their views on children's food and physical activity issues, and to collectively advocate for the improvement of children's food and physical activity environments (for example, reduced marketing targeted at young children, more healthy choices for school canteens, and making neighbourhoods safer and more child-friendly).

The Parents Jury enables parents to nominate and vote for the biannual Parents Jury Awards for people or organisations that affect, positively or negatively, the availability and promotion of healthy food and physical activity choices for children.

The Parents Jury is co-ordinated and administered by Diabetes Australia-Vic, The Cancer Council Australia and Australasian Society for the Study of Obesity, which together have a major interest in improving children's nutrition and levels of physical activity, and reducing overweight and obesity in Australia. The increase of overweight and obesity is one of the biggest health threats facing Australian children.

For further information and to join the Parent's Jury go to www.parentsjury.org.au.



An update from the Parents Jury

(This article is courtesy of the Parents Jury website – www.parentsjury.org.au.)

Many schools rely on regular fundraising activities to raise vital money to purchase resources and equipment that may otherwise be unaffordable. Fundraising activities can be a great opportunity to promote a healthy lifestyle to the whole school community. The options for healthy fundraising activities are endless. Healthy food and other everyday or luxury items can be made and sold, events can be organised, skills can be taught and information can be shared.

Schools need to be creative with their fundraising activities and ensure that they do not rely on unhealthy, high fat, high sugar, junk food options that send out the wrong messages to students, parents and staff.

There are literally hundreds of ideas for healthy fundraising activities for schools. Members of The Parents Jury have contributed the following suggestions:

- fun run
- lapathon around school grounds – children can walk or ride their bikes
- school BBQ
- trash and treasure sale
- car boot sale
- school fair
- toothpaste/toothbrush fundraiser
- children's stickers and labels
- craft project kits
- personalized t-shirts
- fruit and vegetable boxes
- apples direct from grower
- printed tea towels with kid's drawings or photos
- healthy food snacks
- re-usable cloth shopping bags with school logo or children's own designs
- apple slinky machines (makes spirals of apple)
- apple slinky stall at school
- toiletry products that can be bought in bulk
- children's toys
- frozen fruit ice creams made with mashed banana base and other fruit added
- punnets of seedlings/bulbs
- locally written books
- greeting cards printed with children's art work
- theatre and movie tickets
- jobs around the house such as window washing, gardening, etc
- stationery items
- newspaper and magazine subscriptions
- entertainment books

The following organisations also have fantastic resources for healthy fundraising activities:

- NSW School Canteen Association healthy fundraising information: <http://www.schoolcanteens.org.au/default.asp?action=article&ID=3716&KeyWords=fundraising>
- South Eastern Sydney and Illawarra Area Health Service have a booklet of local fundraising ideas available to download at: <http://www.iahs.nsw.gov.au/Publications/Fundraiser%20FHK%20Combined.pdf>
- Community Nutrition and State Parents and Friends in Tasmania have a publication available to download with lots of ideas for healthy fundraising called "Fruitful Fundraising": <http://www.parentsandfriendstasmania.asn.au/ff%20home.htm>

Join the SunSmart Schools National Program

If your school is not already a registered SunSmart School then this is a good time to join hundreds of other schools across Australia that have already gained SunSmart School status. If your school is doing a great job in providing a sun safe environment for your students and staff, why not become a SunSmart School. It is a very straight forward process, involving answering a questionnaire and sending it back in with a copy of your skin protection policy. Your application will then be assessed to ensure that it is in line with the national standard criteria.



Once a school has gained SunSmart status they receive a large aluminium SunSmart School sign to display in a prominent spot. This lets the wider school community know that their school is committed to providing a sun safe environment for its students and staff.

If you would like to become a SunSmart School simply download the application form from www.cancersa.org.au or contact me directly on 8291 4149 or by email cmcnamara@cancersa.org.au.

If you haven't updated your skin protection policy in the last 2 years then this is a good time to do so before spring arrives and ultraviolet radiation levels begin to rise. A SunSmart checklist that will assist you can be found on The Cancer Council South Australia's website.



Please use this checklist if you are reviewing or updating your SunSmart policy and practice.

POLICY REVIEW CHECKLIST	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	The policy is implemented from the beginning of September until the end of April
<input type="checkbox"/>	All students wear a broad brimmed legionnaire or bucket hat (deep crown and minimum 6cm brim) whenever they are outside.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Appropriate sun protective clothing is included in the school uniform / dress code. This includes the use of rash vests or t-shirts over bathers for swimming.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Students are encouraged to use available areas of shade for outdoor activities.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Students who do not have appropriate hats with them are asked to play in an area protected from the sun.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Staff act as positive role models by practising SunSmart behaviours including appropriate hat wearing when outdoors.
<input type="checkbox"/>	The use of SPF 30+ broad spectrum, water resistant sunscreen is encouraged, with time for application of sunscreen allowed.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Programs on skin cancer prevention are included in the curriculum of at least three year levels.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Consideration is given when planning all outdoor events eg. camps, excursions, sporting events. Where possible, outdoor activities or events are scheduled earlier in the morning or later in the afternoon, indoor venues are used or the activity is held in Term 2 or 3.
<input type="checkbox"/>	SunSmart behaviour is regularly reinforced and promoted to the whole school community (eg. via newsletters, assemblies) and all new families and staff members are informed of the policy.
<input type="checkbox"/>	The school has sufficient shade or is working towards increasing the number of trees and shade structures so as to provide adequate sun protected areas in the school grounds.
<input type="checkbox"/>	The school reviews its skin protection policy regularly (at least every 2 years) by monitoring the school's compliance with its policy and making suggestions for improvement.
<input type="checkbox"/>	The use of wrap-around sunglasses is encouraged. <i>(optional)</i>

If you have any questions or require further information please contact Carmel McNamara, SunSmart School's Program on (08) 8291 4149 or by email on cmcnamara@cancersa.org.au

Speakers' Bureau

The Cancer Council South Australia's Speakers Bureau – skin cancer, nutrition and cancer prevention, physical activity information sessions.

Would you like a speaker to come to your school to talk to staff, governing council or parent groups about skin cancer, nutrition and cancer prevention and how to best protect your school community.

Skin cancer prevention is a very popular topic and assists school communities to keep up to date with information and available resources. Our Speakers' Bureau provides presentations on a range of topics from skin cancer to nutrition and cancer prevention, early detection and the work of The Cancer Council. There is also another information session available now on physical activity and cancer prevention.

To organise your free presentation, contact the Speakers' Bureau Coordinator on 8291 4111 or download request forms from the Speakers' Bureau section on the website www.cancersa.org.au

NB Please note that the Speakers' Bureau is not available for students.