

# A sample skin protection policy for early childhood centres



## Rationale

Australia has the highest incidence of skin cancer in the world with two out of every three people developing some form of skin cancer before they are 70.

Skin damage, including skin cancer, is the result of cumulative exposure to the sun. Sun exposure in the first ten years of life determines, to a substantial degree, the likelihood of skin cancer developing later in life.

Cancer Council SA advises people protect their skin at times when the ultraviolet (UV) radiation level is 3 and above—this is when it is strong enough to cause damage to unprotected skin. For much of South Australia, UV radiation levels are 3 and above everyday from September to April—it is during these months that sun protection is necessary.

Cancer Council SA recommends that a skin protection policy be in place from 1 September until 30 April when UV radiation levels are 3 and above. It is highly recommended that UV radiation levels are monitored, particularly during May and August as they still may be 3 or above depending on your location. Cancer Council SA also recommends that particular care should be taken during these months between 10.00 am – 3.00 pm, when the UV radiation levels are at their highest.

It is important to balance sun protection with safe sun exposure for the production of vitamin D for bone growth and development. During May to August, at times when the UV radiation level is below 3, sun protection for most people is not necessary.

## Aims

The aims of the '\_\_\_\_\_ Early Childhood Service skin protection policy' are to promote among children, staff and parents:

- Positive attitudes towards skin protection.
- Lifestyle practices which can help reduce the incidence of skin cancer and the number of related deaths.
- Personal responsibility for and decision making about skin protection.
- Awareness of the need for environmental changes in our centre to reduce the level of sun exposure when the UV radiation level is 3 and above.

## Implementation

This policy is for implementation from 1 September to 30 April. Outside of this time care should also be taken when the ultraviolet radiation level is 3 (moderate) and above.

The purpose of the policy is to ensure that all members of our Early Childhood Service are protected from skin damage caused by the harmful rays of the sun. Babies under 12 months need special consideration—see strategy 5.

It is an expectation that all staff, students and parents of \_\_\_\_\_ Early Childhood Service will use the following skin protection strategies:

- 1 Take care to protect the skin when the ultraviolet radiation level is 3 (moderate) and above. Extra care should be taken between 10.00 am and 3.00 pm when UV radiation levels are highest.
  - 1.1 The children's lunch, rest time and indoor activities will be held between 10.00 am and 3.00 pm to minimise exposure to UV radiation in the middle of the day.
  - 1.2 Whenever possible, all outdoor activities will be scheduled before 10.00 am and after 3.00 pm or in the shaded areas of the service.
- 2 Use the shade of trees, pergolas, umbrellas and tents whenever outdoors.
  - 2.1 Tree planting will be organised at the service with priority given any open space grassed area.
  - 2.2 The sandpit and play equipment area to be a priority for shade structure planning
  - 2.3 The further provision of shade areas is a priority for the service.
- 3 Wear appropriate clothing which protects the skin.
  - 3.1 Children, staff and parents will be expected to wear a broad brimmed hat, legionnaire style hat, or a bucket hat (bucket hat must have a deep crown and minimum 5 cm brim for children under 5 years of age and 6 cms for older children and adults) whenever they are involved in outside activities. Children not wearing an appropriate hat will be expected to play in the shade.
  - 3.2 Children will be encouraged to wear shirts with collars and at least elbow length sleeves and longer style shorts/skirts.
- 4 Apply a broad-spectrum, water resistant sunscreen with an SPF of 30+ to clean, dry skin, 15—20 minutes before

going outdoors for lunch or activities. Sunscreen should be reapplied every two hours if outdoors for a prolonged period of time or more frequently if involved in water activities or perspiring.

- 4.1 Adequate time must be allowed for correct application of sunscreen on children before they go outdoors.
  - 4.2 Parents will be encouraged to supply sunscreen for their children although there will be bulk sunscreen packs available at the service.
  - 4.3 Sunscreen will be applied before the children's morning outdoor activities and again before they go outside in the afternoon at times between 10.00 am and 3.00 pm or when the UV is 3 and above.
- 5 The special needs of babies:
- 5.1 Babies (under the age of 12 months) should be kept out of the direct sunlight as much as possible and always protected by shade, clothing and hats.
  - 5.2 Sunscreen should be applied to small areas of exposed skin not protected by clothing and hats, where necessary.
- 6 Reinforcing the SunSmart message in all service activities and in general service procedures is an important strategy in the adoption of skin protection behaviours.
- 6.1 Staff will be encouraged to role model appropriate SunSmart strategies in all service activities.
  - 6.2 Skin cancer prevention will be included in appropriate teaching activities.
  - 6.3 Staff will be encouraged to keep up to date with new information and resources from Cancer Council SA.
  - 6.4 Information about the centre's SunSmart Policy will be given to all new staff, students and families.
- 7 The '\_\_\_\_\_ Early Childhood Service skin protection policy' will be evaluated on a two yearly basis.
- 7.1 Policy issues will be discussed at staff and parent meetings.

For more information please don't hesitate to contact:

**Cancer Council Helpline 13 11 20**

Or visit our website on:

[www.sunsmart.org.au](http://www.sunsmart.org.au)

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