

# Information for early childhood services



## Being SunSmart during the winter months and vitamin D

“Sensible sun protection does not put people at risk of vitamin D deficiency. But there are times when it’s actually important to leave your hat and sunscreen off.”  
(Professor Brenda Wilson, CE of Cancer Council SA)

**Cancer Council SA recommends that Early Childhood Services in South Australia implement a comprehensive skin protection policy when the ultraviolet radiation (UVR) levels are 3 and above—this is generally from the beginning of September until the end of April.**

During May to August in South Australia, skin protection is not necessary for most people as UV radiation levels generally fall below 3. On a normal school day from May to August, when UV levels are below 3, the chances of skin damage from the sun for most people is low.

### When do we need to take extra care in winter months?

- on clear sunny days in early May and late August when the UV may reach 3 and above during the middle of the day
- if children are outside for long periods of time—e.g. a picnic or excursion.

On these days, skin protection is still recommended, particularly for children and adults with very fair skin that burns easily.

### Sun protection and babies

Babies’ skin is thinner than adults’ skin; it is extremely sensitive and can burn easily. New born babies in particular and babies under the age of 12 months should be kept out of the direct sun as much as possible and well protected from UV radiation by clothing, hats and shade. If a baby is well protected then sunscreen need only be used occasionally on very small amounts of their exposed skin.

### How can I find out what the UV level is?

There are two tools that will help you.

- look for the SunSmart UV Alert on The Advertiser weather page or go to <http://www.bom.gov.au/weather/uv>. The UV Alert is issued every day by the Bureau of Meteorology when the UV level is predicted to be 3 and above. The Alert indicates the hours when the UV will be 3 and over, so you know when skin protection is needed. For instance, in April it may say that protection is needed between 11:30 am and 2:15 pm. During the days when the UV is below 3, no UV alert is issued
- find out what the UV level is in real time at [www.arpansa.gov.au/uvindex/realtime/aus\\_rt.htm](http://www.arpansa.gov.au/uvindex/realtime/aus_rt.htm). This tells you what the UV is at any time of the day.

### How do we get enough vitamin D?

Most people get enough vitamin D if they expose their hands, face and arms to

- **10 minutes** of sunlight **before 10am or after 3pm from September to April** and
- **2–3 hours per week** of cumulative sunlight exposure **from May to August.**

“Anyone who thinks they may be vitamin D deficient should seek medical advice, not seek more sun,”  
(Professor Ebeling, Medical Director of Osteoporosis Australia).

### What about different skin types?

Children should learn about their own skin type—particularly those with very fair skin, which burns easily—and the importance of skin protection. All children need to protect their eyes from the sun by wearing a hat when the UV is 3 and above.

- children with very fair skin are encouraged to make skin protection a part of their daily routine all year round
- children with dark skin need to protect themselves from the sun as they can still sustain accumulated skin and eye damage
- children with very dark skin do not normally need the same level of sun protection as fair skinned children due to their high level of melanin. It is still recommended that these children wear a hat to protect their eyes and face
- people with very dark skin need more sun exposure to produce enough vitamin D so it is important that they have some sun on their skin during the winter months

### How can we change our skin protection policy?

Early Childhood Services are encouraged to have an active sun protection policy in place from 1 September to 30 April.

To ensure children maintain the habit of hat wearing, a winter beanie could be worn during the months of May–August.

### In summary

- a comprehensive SA school skin protection policy should be in place and actively implemented from 1 September until the end of April and when the ultraviolet radiation levels are 3 and above outside of these times
- it is not necessary to wear hats and sunscreen when the UV is below 3 (May–August)

- care should still be taken from May to August if children are outside for an extended period of time on a clear sunny day (e.g. an excursion)
- people with very fair skin that burns easily should always protect themselves from the sun
- other health effects from overexposure to the sun, such as eye damage and immuno-suppression, are independent of skin colour
- always talk to your doctor if you are concerned about Vitamin D levels.

### Find out more

Cancer Council Australia's position statement 'The risks and benefits of sun exposure' [www.cancer.org.au/positionVitD](http://www.cancer.org.au/positionVitD)

#### General SunSmart information

- [www.cancersa.org.au](http://www.cancersa.org.au)
- Cancer Council Australia [www.cancer.org.au/cancersmartlifestyle/sunsmart](http://www.cancer.org.au/cancersmartlifestyle/sunsmart)

#### UV information

- Bureau of Meteorology <http://www.bom.gov.au/weather/uv>
- Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency (ARPANZA) [www.arpansa.gov.au/uvindex/daily/ausuvindex.htm](http://www.arpansa.gov.au/uvindex/daily/ausuvindex.htm)
- real time UVR levels for around Australia [www.arpansa.gov.au/uvindex/realtime/ausrealtime.htm](http://www.arpansa.gov.au/uvindex/realtime/ausrealtime.htm)

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