

Hat guidelines for schools

Skin cancer rates are higher in Australia than anywhere else in the world, with skin cancers accounting for around 80% of all new cancers diagnosed each year¹.

The major cause of skin cancer is over exposure to the ultraviolet radiation (UVR) from the sun over many years, particularly during childhood and adolescence². Even if exposure does not cause obvious sunburn, damage still occurs and accumulates over the years. It is never too late to start protecting your skin.

Skin protection is important in South Australia particularly from September until the end of April.

Why hats?

Common sites of skin damage and skin cancer are the neck, ears, temples, lips, face and nose. These areas are constantly exposed to the elements and therefore, generally receive more UVR than other body parts.

Wearing a hat is one strategy that is recommended by The Cancer Council South Australia to protect the face, back of the neck and ears.

Hats should always be used in combination with other forms of sun protection practices such as:

- ✦ seeking shade where possible between 10 am and 3 pm particularly from September to April
- ✦ timetabling outdoor activities outside the times when UVR levels are most intense (between 10 am and 3 pm) where ever possible
- ✦ wearing protective clothing - lightweight shirts with collars and long sleeves, long pants or skirts
- ✦ applying SPF 30+ broad spectrum, water-resistant sunscreen and regularly reapplying if required (every two hours).

Factors to consider when choosing a hat for your school.

We encourage schools to consult widely with students, staff and parents before introducing one of the three hat styles recommended by The Cancer Council.

Factors to consider include:

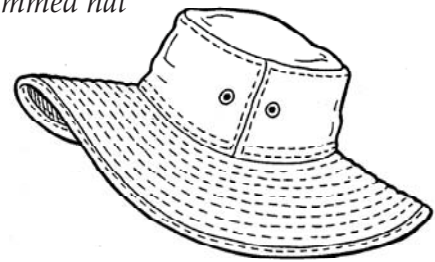
- ✦ good sun protection
- ✦ fashion trends
- ✦ practicalities (eg which hat is safe for sport)
- ✦ cost
- ✦ and most importantly, safety.

Ventilation should also be a consideration if the hat is to be used during physical activity or warmer weather.

Which type of hat?

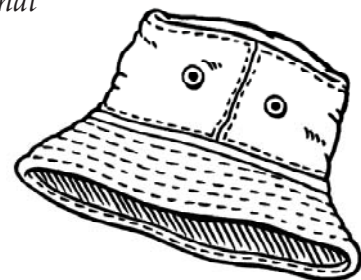
The Cancer Council recommends all students and staff wear hats that provide good shade to the face, back of the neck and ears when outdoors.

Broad brimmed hat



Broad brimmed hats should have brim at least 7.5cms wide. A broad brimmed hat that provides good shade can considerably reduce the exposure of UVR to the face. The brim width for children under 10 should be proportional to the size of the child's head and ensure that their face is well shaded.

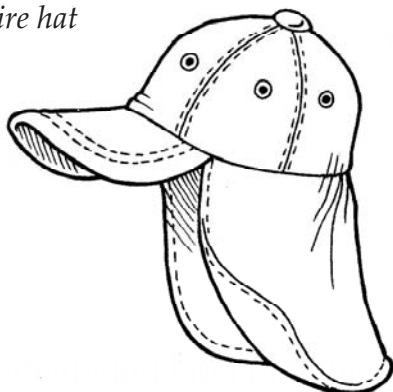
Bucket hat



Bucket or surfie style hats should have a deep crown and sit low on the head. The angled brim should be at least 6cm and provide the face, neck and ears with plenty of protection from the sun.

The brim width on bucket hats for pre-school aged children should be proportional to the size of the child's head, ensuring that their face is sufficiently shaded (minimum of 5cm as a rough guide).

Legionnaire hat



Legionnaire style hats should have a flap that covers the neck and meets the sides of the front peak to provide protection to the side of the face.

Baseball caps and sun visors are NOT recommended as they leave the ears and back of the neck exposed.

UVR and temperature

In South Australia, the UVR levels are highest from September through to the end of April.

UVR cannot be seen or felt and the intensity of such radiation is not related to air temperature³.

People often get sunburnt on a cooler day because they tend to stay out in the direct sun for longer rather than seeking shade or covering up as on a hot day⁴.

All schools should have an active skin protection policy to minimise the danger of excessive UVR exposure for both staff and students.

References

- 1 P Gies, J Javorniczky, C Roy, S Henderson. "Measurements of the UVR Protection Provided by Hats used at School". *Photochemistry and Photobiology*, 82 (2006), 750-754.
- 2 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare & Australasian Association of Cancer Registries 2000. *Cancer in Australia 1998*.
- 3 R Marks, D Jolley, S Leats, P Foley. "The role of childhood exposure to sunlight in the development of solar keratoses and non-melanocytic skin cancer." *Medical Journal of Australia*, 152 (1990), 62-65.
- 4 D Hill, JM Elwood & DR English (Eds.) *Cancer Prevention - Cancer Causes. Prevention of Skin Cancer*. Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2004.
- 5 R Marks and D Hill. *Melanoma Control, Prevention and Early Detection*, Australian Cancer Society, 1992.

The Cancer Council South Australia recommends...

That all people protect their skin when the SunSmart UV Alert indicates the UV Index is at 3 or above by:

1. Seeking shade.
2. Covering up with sun-protective clothing that covers as much skin as possible.
3. Wearing a hat that protects your head, face, neck and ears.
4. Wearing wrap around sunglasses with an EPF 10.
5. Liberally applying SPF 30+ broad spectrum sunscreen and reapplying regularly.

And remember, to take extra care between 10 am to 3 pm when UV Index levels reach their peak.

Make

SLIP! SLOP! SLAP!

a natural part of your day.

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