



Teaching pre-schoolers SUN SAFE play, everyday!

Lifestyle habits usually start at a young age.
Here are some great ways to teach children the importance of safe sun play and how to protect themselves from harmful UV rays.

- Work together with parents and perhaps your local Public Health Department to develop a "Sun Safety" policy for your daycare.
- Show the Canadian Dermatology Association's educational video, "Sun Safe Play, Everyday", on a regular basis, as a constant reminder for the children of the dangers of UV rays and how to protect themselves.
- After viewing, have group discussions (question and answer periods) about the "Sun Safe Play, Everyday" video, encouraging children to identify with the characters and remember their important message.
- Have a "silly hat" day, where children are invited to bring in their silliest sun hats. This will encourage them to choose a fun hat that they love, making them more likely to want to wear it on a regular basis.
- Prepare a checklist for the children in your care to follow everyday before playing outside. Go through the list every day as a group, perhaps adding rhyme, to ensure protection and encourage them to adopt these rules as long term lifestyle habits.
- Try to schedule outdoor play time before 11 a.m. or after 4 p.m. If the children must be outdoors, make sure they are properly protected with sunscreen, long sleeves, hats and sunglasses.
- When playing outside, seek shade wherever possible. Teach children to look for their shadows as an indication of the sun's strength. (*If your shadow is shorter than you are, it's time to find some shade!*)
- Plan an activity around identifying shady places. Talk to the children about the ways we can have fun in the shade (swimming on the shady side of the pool on a hot day, placing sand boxes under trees, etc.). Encourage them to think of ideas too!
- Focus a few activities a week around sun protection. For example, have the children draw pictures of outdoor play and remind them to include all the elements for proper sun protection. Inspire children to incorporate these rules into other activities as well (e.g.: playing with dolls, playing "house", etc.).
- Encourage parents to provide you with written permission to apply sunscreen to their children, and invite them to provide their own bottles. Keep a shelf near the door with all the sunscreen bottles, labeled individually for each child, to act as a constant reminder to children of the importance of applying sunscreen before going outside.
- One of the best ways to teach is by example. Make sure you practice what you preach!
- Teach children how to find the UV index on the weather station and create a chart at the daycare or school to show what the daily UV index should be.

For additional information, please consult www.dermatology.ca.