

Sun Protection for Your Children¹

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My children were all born during the summer months, and as we gradually spent more and more time outside, I wondered how best to protect them from the hot summer sun. Like all babies, their skin was sensitive and could have easily been damaged and burned. Even a few minutes in the bright sunshine can burn unprotected skin (Centers for Disease Control, 2000), and sunburn can be especially painful and serious for babies (Health Canada, n.d.).

If you have a new baby, you don't need to stay home to keep her or him safe from the sun. Being outdoors offers fresh air and exercise for your baby's overall health. But your baby can't tell you the sun is too hot or too bright, and can't move out of the sunlight. So you will need to make sure your baby is out of the sunshine and is covered in other ways.

Health experts recommend that parents take the following steps to prevent sunburn and skin damage, as well as dehydration:

- Avoid exposing babies under one year old to the sun. Keep them in the shade, "under a tree, an umbrella, or a stroller canopy" (Health Canada, n.d.).
- Dress infants in clothing that covers them, such as lightweight long pants, long-sleeved shirts, and wide-brimmed hats (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2006).
- "When adequate clothing and shade are not available, parents can apply [a little] sunscreen to small areas, such as the infant's face and the back of the hands" (AAP, 2006). Use a sunscreen of at least SPF 15 and with UVA/UVB protection.

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As tempting as it may be to enjoy that sunshine with your baby, experts still recommend it's best to avoid the sun altogether or find a cool spot in the shade (Centers for Disease Control, 2000).

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http://www.radiosource.net/radio_stories/445.mp3

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References

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