

Keep infants out of sun and heat, experts warn

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Avoid using sunscreen on babies under 6 months old and watch for signs of dehydration.

(HealthDay) -- Because infants are so much smaller than adults and lack the ability to sweat, heat and sun exposure pose specific risks for babies, experts say.

Fortunately, there are steps parents and caregivers can take to protect infants this summer, according to the U.S. [Food and Drug Administration](#) and the American Academy of Pediatrics. But one of the usual summertime recommendations, sunscreen, is not advised for children under 6 months old, they pointed out.

Dr. Hari Cheryl Sachs, a [pediatrician](#) with the FDA, said parents should avoid putting sunscreen on their infants. Sachs explained that young babies' skin is much thinner than that of adults and can absorb the active, [chemical ingredients](#) found in sunscreens more easily. She noted that

because they have a relatively high surface-area to body-weight ratio, they are at greater risk for [allergic reactions](#) or inflammation from exposure to sunscreen.

"The best approach is to keep infants under 6 months out of the sun, and to avoid exposure to the sun in the hours between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m., when ultraviolet (UV) rays are most intense," Sachs said in an FDA news release.

If necessary, shade can be created by an umbrella or stroller [canopy](#), Sachs pointed out. When there are no other options available, a small amount of sunscreen with a sun-protection factor of at least 15 can be applied to small areas of exposed skin, such as the cheeks and back of the hands. Applying a small amount of sunscreen to the baby's inner wrist first to test for sensitivity is a good idea, she noted.

Sachs and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) offered additional tips to ensure infants are protected from [sun exposure](#), including:

- To prevent sunburns, dress infants in lightweight pants and shirts with long sleeves, as well as hats with brims that shade the ears and neck, advised the AAP. Sheer fabrics should be avoided because they could still result in a sunburn.
- Ensure babies are well hydrated. Offer them their usual feeding of breast milk or formula, said Sachs. Use a cooler to store the liquids if they will be out in the sun for more than a few minutes.
- Monitor babies for signs of [sunburn](#) or dehydration, including fussiness, redness, excessive crying and lack of urination.
- If sunscreen is applied to babies, steer clear of products containing the insect repellent DEET.
- Babies who become sunburned should be taken out of the [sun](#) immediately, and cold compresses should be applied to the

affected areas.

More information:

The American Academy of Pediatrics has more [sun safety tips](#).

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