

Kids are at risk for sun damage during spring break

April 2 2014, by Nora Plunkett

As families prepare to escape the winter weather for somewhere warmer this spring break, they should exercise caution when exposing their skin to the sun after a long winter indoors. Loyola University Health System (LUHS) pediatric dermatologists warn that kids are especially at risk.

"Protecting your child's [skin](#) from the sun after they have been bundled up all winter is critical to prevent long-term [sun damage](#) and premature aging," said Lily Uihlein, MD, pediatric dermatologist, LUHS.

Loyola dermatologists warn that those traveling to tropical climates are at an even greater risk for sun damage.

"The sun tends to be more intense in areas closer to the equator, giving you more exposure to harmful UV rays," said Wendy Schumacher-Kim, DO, pediatric dermatologist, LUHS. "Children also have delicate skin, placing them in even greater danger in warmer climates."

Having one blistering sunburn in childhood or adolescence more than doubles a person's chance of developing melanoma later in life, yet less than one-third of all young people take the proper steps to protect their skin from excessive sun exposure, according to the Skin Cancer Foundation.

Drs. Schumacher-Kim and Uihlein report that teaching children important skin health habits now can ensure that these protective measures become routine as they grow older.

They offer the following tips to protect your family's skin this [spring break](#):

- Use a broad-spectrum sunscreen daily with an SPF of at least 30. Apply it liberally at least 15 minutes before sun exposure.
- Repeat application of sunscreen at least every 2-3 hours.
- Wear protective clothing outdoors, including a wide-brimmed hat, a long-sleeved shirt, pants, rash guards and sunglasses with UV protection.
- Stay out of the midday sun (10 a.m. to 2 p.m.).
- Use a higher SPF when at higher elevations.
- Avoid sunbathing and tanning salons before your trip. UV rays from artificial sources, such as tanning beds and sunlamps, are just as dangerous as those from the [sun](#).
- Set a good example for your children by always using sunscreen and wearing protective clothing.

Provided by Loyola University Health System

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