

# Many parents aren't shielding babies from sun's harmful rays: study

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12 percent told researchers their children had tanned in their first six months of life.

(HealthDay)—Many parents aren't providing their babies with proper sun protection, a new small study finds.

University of Miami researchers surveyed 95 [parents](#), most of them black or Hispanic, and found that only about 15 percent knew American Academy of Dermatology (AAD) recommendations for sun safety in infants.

Eighty-three percent of the parents said they regularly seek shade for their babies, but only 43 percent routinely use a hat to shield their baby from the sun, and 40 percent said they routinely dress their babies in long sleeves and pants to protect them from the sun.

Twenty-nine percent of parents said they regularly use sunscreen on

[children](#) younger than 6 months, even though other methods of [sun protection](#) are recommended for children that young.

The survey also found that one-third of the parents said they often tried to get their baby to "develop tolerance to the sun's rays" by gradually increasing the infant's exposure to the sun.

Three percent of parents said their children suffered a sunburn during their first six months of life, and 12 percent said their children had tanned at that early age, according to the findings being presented at the AAD Summer Academy Meeting held this week in New York City. Findings presented at meetings are considered preliminary until published in a peer-reviewed journal.

"Some parents may think they're helping their children by exposing them to the sun, but actually, the opposite is true. Unprotected sun exposure can damage the skin and lead to skin cancer," study author Dr. Keyvan Nouri said in an AAD news release. Nouri is chief of dermatology services at Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center/University of Miami Hospital and Clinics.

He said the findings offer particular insight into the sun protection habits of minorities. They may believe they don't need sun protection, but that's not true.

"Anyone can get [skin cancer](#), so everyone should take steps to protect themselves and their children from the sun's harmful rays. Parents of all skin colors should set a good example by practicing sun protection and instill good habits in their children from an early age," Nouri said.

**More information:** The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more about [sun protection for children](#).

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