

# Here comes the sun, and kid sun safety

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(HealthDay)—Summer sun brings childhood fun, but experts warn it also brings skin cancer dangers, even for kids.

"Don't assume children cannot get [skin](#) cancer because of their age," said Dr. Alberto Pappo, director of the solid tumor division at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital in Memphis, Tenn. "Unlike other cancers, the conventional [melanoma](#) that we see mostly in adolescents behaves the same as it does in adults."

His advice: "Children are not immune from extreme sun damage, and parents should start sun protection early and make it a habit for life."

So, this and every summer, parents should take steps to shield kids from the sun's harmful UV rays.

Those steps include:

- **Avoid exposure.** Infants and children younger than 6 months old should avoid sun exposure entirely, Pappo advised. If these babies are outside or on the beach this summer, they should be covered up with hats and appropriate clothing. It's also a good idea to avoid being outside when UV rays are at their peak, between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m.
- **Use sunscreen.** It's important to apply a broad-spectrum sunscreen to [children's](#) exposed skin. Choose one with at least SPF15 that protects against both UVA and UVB rays. Pappo cautioned that sunscreen needs to be reapplied every couple of hours and after swimming—even if the label says it is "water-resistant." However, [sunscreen](#) should *not* be used on infants younger than 6 months old because their exposure to the chemicals in these products would be too high, he noted.
- **Keep kids away from tanning beds.** Melanoma rates are rising among teenagers, partly due to their use of indoor tanning beds. Use of tanning beds by people younger than 30 boosts their risk for this deadly form of [cancer](#) by 75 percent, according to the

International Agency for Research on Cancer.

- **Get children screened.** Early detection of melanoma is key to increasing patients' odds of survival. Children with suspicious moles or skin lesions should be seen by a doctor as soon as possible, Pappo advised. Removing melanoma in its early stages also increases the chances of avoiding more invasive surgical procedures later on, he added.

**More information:** There are more sun-safety tips at the [Skin Cancer Foundation](#).

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