

Sun Safety



For the classroom teacher:

Sun exposure and cancer risk

While some sun exposure can be enjoyable, and even helps the body make vitamin D, too much sun exposure is dangerous. Exposure to the sun's ultraviolet (UV) rays appears to be the most important environmental factor in developing skin cancer. This makes skin cancer a largely preventable disease when sun protective practices are used consistently.

The burden of skin cancer

Skin cancer is the most common form of cancer in the United States. It is estimated that more than 3.5 million basal cell and squamous cell skin cancers occur in the US each year, many of which are multiple diagnoses within the same person. There are more than 70,000 cases of melanoma in the US each year.¹ This is the most serious form of skin cancer. It can spread to other parts of the body quickly and is responsible for a large majority of all deaths from skin cancer.

Did you know?

Everyone should practice sun-safe behaviors, but some people have a greater chance of developing skin cancer. You may have an increased risk of skin cancer if you have one or more of the following risk factors:

- You spend a lot of time outdoors.
- You have light skin color, hair color, or eye color.
- You have a family history of skin cancer.
- You have a personal history of skin cancer.
- You have a history of sunburns early in life.
- You live or vacation at high altitudes.
- You have freckles and burn quickly.
- You have many moles, irregularly shaped moles, or large moles.
- You have had an organ transplant.
- You have a weak immune system.

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Sun safety for children and youth

Parents, caregivers, schools, and communities have a responsibility to provide young people with sun-safe environments as well as the knowledge and skills necessary to practice sun-safe behaviors. Kids may spend a great deal of time outdoors exposed to the sun's harmful rays during school-related activities such as physical education class, recess, field trips, or sports practice. Parents, caregivers, and school staff must serve as role models, making sure schools work toward adopting policies and programs that promote sun safety and reduce the risk of skin cancer.

As an educator, you can have a profound influence on the health of your students. Giving them the knowledge and skills they need to protect their skin from the damaging effects of the sun beginning at a very young age can literally save a life. Youth are particularly at risk of overexposure since a substantial amount of the average person's lifetime UV exposure occurs before the age of 18.

Sun-safety basic recommendations

The American Cancer Society recommends that people remember this simple phrase when it comes to sun safety: *Slip! Slop! Slap!®* and *Wrap!* It promotes the following sun safe behaviors:

Slip on a shirt. A long-sleeved shirt is best. If you choose a short-sleeved shirt, be sure to use sunscreen on the skin that is exposed.

Slop on sunscreen. Use sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 15 or higher. To be effective, sunscreen needs to be generously applied at least 30 minutes before sun exposure and reapplied every 2 hours and after swimming or sweating.

Slap on a hat. The head and neck are common places for skin cancer to start. For maximum protection, wear a hat with 3- to 4-inch brim all around. Be sure to use sunscreen on your ears and neck if you wear a smaller hat or a baseball cap.

Wrap on sunglasses. Sunglasses protect both the eyes and the skin around the eyes from harmful UV rays. Choose sunglasses that block 100% of both UVA and UVB rays.

Seek shade. Because the sun's UV rays are most intense between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., outdoor activities should be minimized during this time. If you are outside during this time, find some shade and keep cool under a tree, umbrella, or structure.

It's also important to avoid indoor tanning beds, booths, and sunlamps. Like the sun, these are sources of harmful UV radiation. Indoor tanning devices are not safe!

Sun safety and academic performance

Although there are no data that links sun safety behaviors to academic achievement, it is clear that severe sunburn can lead to an absence from school. High absenteeism is linked to lower academic achievement. The good news is that youth who engage in overall healthy behaviors tend to perform better at school.

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Teaching sun safety to your students

The classroom activity sheets included in this folder support the following learning objectives:

- Students will learn about and understand the link between UV radiation exposure and their lifelong risk for skin cancer.
- Students will understand and be motivated to practice sun-safe behaviors in order to protect themselves from skin cancer risk.

Classroom activities

Grades 1-6: Sun-safety Poster Classroom Activity

Grades 1-6: Sun-exposure Experiment Classroom Activity

Grades 2-6: It's a Sunny, Sunny World Classroom Discussion and Activity

Grades 2-6: Sun-safety Investigation Interview Classroom Activity

Grades 2-6: Sun-safety Word Scramble

These activities are also available online at RelayRecess.org. All kit materials may be reproduced for classroom use.

Additional materials

- **Be a Sun-safe Family Information Sheet** – This information sheet is designed to alert and motivate parents and caregivers to practice sun-safe behaviors for themselves and their families.
- **Sun-safety Activities for Your Relay Recess Event Information Sheet** – This information sheet gives suggested activities to highlight sun-safety information at your event.

Resources

1 Source: Cancer Facts & Figures 2011

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Sun-safety Poster Classroom Activity

Objective: To have students participate in making a prominent visual aid that can be used to promote sun protection. Students learn that sun-safe practices are easily identified and can serve as reminders of everyday sun-safe behaviors.

Grade Level: 1-6

Materials:

- Magazines
- Scissors
- Glue or paste

Activity:

Have students clip images related to sun protection from magazines. Let children paste their images onto a group collage. You may want to have groups of 2 or 3 children work on a smaller collage and then hang all of the collages together to make a large display for the classroom.

Examples of images for children to look for:

- People in the shade
- People sitting under beach umbrellas
- People wearing hats
- People wearing long sleeves
- People wearing sunglasses
- Sunscreen ads

Additional activities:

You could modify this activity so that the individual student can:

- Create a collage that can be taken home for display.
- Create a collage that can be put on the cover of a student folder or workbook.
- Create a collage that can be laminated as a desktop or take-home placemat.
- Create a mobile using a hanger and string and some of your pictures.

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Sun-exposure Experiment Classroom Activity

Objectives:

- Allow children to compare the effects of the sun on different substances.
- Show children the power of the sun's ultraviolet rays.

Grade Level: 1-6

Materials:

- Sun-reactive materials, including things like ice cubes, a measuring cup with 1/8 cup water in it, chocolate, gummy candy, crayons, sun-exposure beads or wristbands, or unwanted film negatives
- Construction paper
- Coins, paper clips, keys

Activity:

Choose a hot, sunny day, and have each child select an item or substance to leave out in the sun. Put items in a sunny spot where they will not be disturbed. Look at items after one hour and again after one day; gauge the sun's effect.

Have students describe what happened. Discuss as a group how the results of this experiment can be related to the effects of the sun on unprotected skin. (Example: after one hour, an ice cube would be melted from the heat of the sun; after one day, the moisture from the melted ice would have dried/evaporated. The same heat that caused the melting and evaporation can damage our skin by burning it and causing it to feel dry.)

Additional activity:

Have students select a brightly colored sheet of construction paper and choose from a collection of flat objects such as keys, coins, and paper clips. Write each student's name on their paper. Have each child place their paper in the sun with their objects on it. Leave the papers for 2 or more hours, after which time the outlines of the objects will be visible.

Have students describe what happened. Discuss as a group how the results of this experiment can be related to the effects of the sun on unprotected skin. (Example: after several hours, the paper not covered by the item is faded. Like our skin, the unprotected areas are changed by the sun's damaging UV rays.)

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It's a Sunny, Sunny World Classroom Discussion and Activity

Objective: Familiarize children with ways that people protect themselves from the sun in different parts of the world.

Grade Level: 1-6

Materials:

- Pictures of people protecting themselves from the sun in different ways from around the world (such as pictures of people in robes or with head coverings used in desert countries, cowboy hats, or straw hats)
- Sun-safe items of clothing, such as hats, scarves, sunglasses
- Clothing items that are not ideal for sun safety, such as sleeveless shirts or baseball caps
- Sunscreen, beach ball, other beach-related decorations

Activities:

Find pictures (or have students bring them from home) of people protecting themselves from the sun in various locations around the world. (You may even want to have actual items on hand.) Have students select an item and talk about how the hat, clothing item, or accessory would protect them from the sun. You could mix in a few items that would not be appropriate for sun safety (baseball cap, or tank top/sleeveless shirt). You may want to mention the fact that in many hot, sunny parts of the world people take a midday nap or siesta to get out of the sun.

Students will describe how different climates (in particular, sunny climates) around the world have an influence on how people dress and how they protect themselves from the damaging effects of the sun.

Examples include:

- Robes/head coverings worn in desert countries
- Straw hats worn in warm, tropical countries
- Sombreros, cowboy hats
- Sunbonnets, straw hats
- Beach umbrellas
- Sunglasses
- Shade trees

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Additional activity

Host a sun-safety “fashion show.” Ask students to bring in an item from home that they could wear or use to help keep them safe from the sun.

Plan a “Beach Day” in the classroom. Have students bring beach towels to sit on, and have them wear shorts, T-shirts, and hats. At 2-hour intervals throughout the day, practice putting on sunscreen. (This can be a pretend activity, or if the student brings sunscreen from home, they could apply it; or you could use a common hand lotion for this demonstration.)

Play catch with a small beach ball, passing the ball around the room. When a student catches it, they can say one thing they have learned about staying safe in the sun.

Add a simple Relay Recess fundraising activity – Have a “Hat Day” where students can pay \$1 to wear an appropriate sun-protecting hat (inside and out) to school all day.

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Sun-safety Investigation Interview Classroom Activity

Objective: Help students understand how families, communities, and schools can support sun safety. Students will gain the perspective of various people interviewed and then reflect on their personal thoughts and opinions. Students will recognize their own ability to be an advocate on behalf of very common cancer prevention behaviors.

Grade Level: 2-6

Materials:

Sun-safety Interview Questions

Activity:

Have students interview “decision makers” at their school, at home, in their community, and at the Relay Recess event to determine their awareness of and support for sun-safe behaviors. Students can work in teams or alone to conduct these interviews, compose a report, and offer their recommendations on what improvements need to be made.

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Sun-safety Interview Questions

At school

1. Are the grounds at the school sun-safe? _____
2. Are there policies that support or restrict students' ability to wear hats and use sunscreen when outdoors during school hours? _____
3. Do teachers in the school practice sun-safe behaviors? _____
4. What recommendations would you make to keep students safe from the damaging effects of the sun?

At home

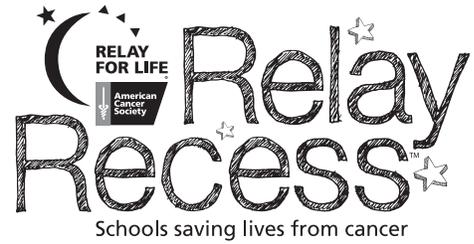
1. How many people in your home have had sunburns? _____
2. Is there sunscreen in the house? _____
3. Is sunscreen use talked about and encouraged? _____
4. Does the family have access to sunscreen, hats, shade structures/umbrellas to use when working or playing outdoors? _____

In your community

1. Is your community a sun-safe community? _____
2. Does the community have public spaces that offer shade, especially places for children? _____
3. Do you see advertisements for sunscreen use in your community? If so, where? _____

4. Where could your community do more to help support sun-safe behaviors? _____

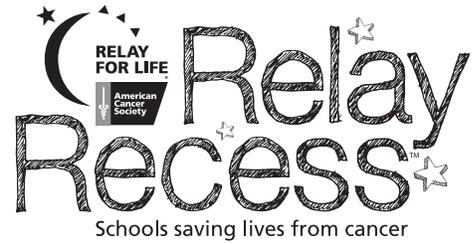
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At the Relay Recess event

1. How long will participants be out in the sun? _____
2. Will sunscreen use be encouraged? _____
3. Are there places to seek shade at the Relay Recess event? _____
4. What could be done to increase awareness about sun safety at the Relay Recess event? _____

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Sun-safety Word Scramble

Name _____ Date _____

Unscramble the sun safety-related words below.

BSULONCK PFS51 _____

GNLAUSSESS _____

PSIL, LPOS, ALSP, PRAW _____

LAURTETLIVO YRSA _____

DWEI MBEDMRI THA _____

KSNI ERCCNA VTORPEEINN _____

NSURNBU _____

MBULEALR _____

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For parents: Be a sun-safe family!

Winter, spring, summer, or fall, kids and adults enjoy spending time outdoors and in the sun. Although some sun can be enjoyable, too much is dangerous. Overexposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation in sunlight and from indoor tanning devices can result in serious health effects, including skin cancer. Youth are particularly at risk of overexposure since a substantial amount of the average person's lifetime UV exposure occurs before the age of 18.

Most people are not aware that skin cancer, while largely preventable, is the most common form of cancer in the United States. By following some simple steps, you can still enjoy time outdoors while protecting yourself and your family from overexposure to UV radiation.

The American Cancer Society recommends that you:

- **Slip on a shirt.** A long-sleeved shirt is best. If you choose a short-sleeved shirt, be sure to apply sunscreen on the skin that is exposed.
- **Slop on sunscreen.** Use sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 15 or higher. To be effective, sunscreen needs to be generously applied at least 30 minutes before sun exposure and reapplied every 2 hours and after swimming or sweating.
- **Slap on a hat.** The head and neck are common places for skin cancer to start. For maximum protection, wear a hat with 3- to 4-inch brim all around. Be sure to use sunscreen on your ears and neck if you wear a smaller hat or a baseball cap.
- **Wrap on sunglasses.** Sunglasses protect the eyes and the skin around the eyes. Choose sunglasses that block 100% of both UVA and UVB rays.
- **Seek shade.** Because the sun's UV rays are most intense between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., outdoor activities should be minimized during this time. If you are outside during this time, find some shade, and keep cool under a tree, umbrella, or structure.
- **Say no to artificial rays.** Do not use indoor tanning beds, booths, and sunlamps. Like the sun, these are sources of harmful UV radiation. Indoor tanning devices are not safe!

Protecting your family

Infants

- Cover babies with protective clothing and hats when outdoors.
- Shade babies with carrier/stroller covers or umbrellas.
- Avoid direct sun exposure. An infant's sensitive skin can burn in minutes.
- Talk with your doctor before using sunscreen on babies under 6 months old.

Kids

- Apply UVA/UVB sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 15 or higher every day that outdoor activities are planned. To be most effective, sunscreen should be applied to skin at least 30 minutes before sun exposure.
- Teach kids to carry sunscreen and reapply every 2 hours and after swimming or sweating.
- Remind kids that sunburn is painful and damages their skin.

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Adults

- Apply a UVA/UVB sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 15 or higher every day that outdoor activities are planned. To be most effective, sunscreen should be applied to skin at least 30 minutes before sun exposure.
- Avoid outdoor sunbathing.
- Reapply sunscreen every 2 hours and after swimming or sweating.
- Avoid indoor tanning, which also exposes the skin to UV radiation. Many people believe that indoor tanning is safe. It is not!

Everyone

- Wear sunscreen daily, especially on your face, neck, and forearms. Even when you're not planning outdoor activities, be prepared. UV radiation exposure ages skin prematurely and contributes to wrinkles and sun spots, and it increases the risk of skin cancer.
- Limit the time you spend in the sun, especially during midday hours.
- Seek shady areas when outdoors.
- Wear protective clothing that includes a wide-brimmed hat and sunglasses.

The truth about indoor tanning

Nearly all communities have local businesses that advertise and promote indoor tanning as a safe alternative to outdoor sunbathing. The fact is that this simply is not true. Many older tanning devices used light sources that emitted shortwave ultraviolet rays (UVB) that burned the skin. As a result, tanning devices were introduced in recent years that were designed to emit mostly longwave ultraviolet rays (UVA). UVA rays reduce the risk for burns, but they penetrate more deeply than UVB rays and weaken the skin's inner connective tissue.

Despite overwhelming evidence of the link between indoor tanning and the risk for skin cancer, more than 25,000 tanning salons around the country continue to entice people to get that "healthy tan." The majority of users are under 25 years of age. Many state governments have begun to take action to regulate the indoor tanning industry. Some states now have laws limiting a minor's access to indoor tanning facilities, including restricting access by age or requiring parental permission.

Indoor tanning facts

- There are just as many risks associated with indoor tanning as outdoor tanning.
- Tanning beds, booths, and sunlamps release high levels of dangerous UV radiation, which can increase the risk of skin cancer.
- Indoor tanning to get a "base" tan does not protect you from sunburn.
- Contrary to current advertisements, the risks of skin injury far outweigh the small benefit of vitamin D absorption that that body gains from UVB/UVA radiation exposure. It is better to get vitamin D through food and supplements.
- Indoor tanning contributes to saggy, wrinkled skin later in life.

Whenever you're spending time outdoors, remember to *Slip! Slop! Slap!®* and *Wrap!!*

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Sun-safety activities for your Relay Recess event

- Show kids how much sunscreen they should put on by measuring it out in different ways, such as with a small breakfast glass, 2 big spoons, or a handful of candy. Have the whole class race to see who can rub in their sunscreen first. The winner gets a cool prize.
- If the Relay Recess event is on the same day as field day, let kids get lathered up with sunscreen then go down a water slip-and-slide. This is a great way to remind them that even if they put on sunscreen, they will need to reapply after swimming or within 2 hours of applying it.
- Have a *Slip! Slop! Slap!*[®] and *Wrap!* relay race. Divide students into teams of approximately 5, and have them race to 4 different stations to perform *Slip! Slop! Slap!* and *Wrap!* (Slipping on a shirt, slopping on sunscreen, slapping on a hat, and wrapping on sunglasses) so they learn and remember these important steps before going outside. The first team to finish wins!
- Have the kids put small sun-screen samples into packets with sun-safety information to give to each team. During the Relay Recess event, have them pass out the kits to each team and remind them to *Slip! Slop! Slap!* and *Wrap!*
- Ask students to write short facts or sun-safety reminders on poster boards that are shaped like the sun. Display them at the event.
- Have the students create a skit that they can perform during the opening ceremony if the community Relay Recess event is outside. (This can be during the “friendly reminders” portion of the opening.) Use props such as an umbrella, a beach blanket, or a beach chair. The kids will feel like celebrities!

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Answer Key

Sun-safety Word Scramble

- sunblock spf 15
- sunglasses
- slip slop slap wrap
- ultraviolet rays
- wide-brimmed hat
- skin cancer prevention
- sunburn
- umbrella