

Background

Australia has one of the highest incidences of skin cancer in the world. Of all new incidents of cancer diagnosed in Australia each year, 80 per cent are skin cancers. Given that children in childcare attend during peak ultraviolet radiation (UVR) times and that they spend much of their day outdoors, childcare has a major role in minimising children's UVR exposure. Further, childcare provides the ideal opportunity to instil in children long-term positive SunSmart habits. Too much of the sun's UV can cause sunburn, skin and eye damage and skin cancer. Exposure to the sun's UV during childhood and adolescence is associated with an increased risk of skin cancer in later life.

Too little UV from the sun can lead to low vitamin D levels. Vitamin D is essential for healthy bones and muscles and for general health

Policy statement

- The Service takes every reasonable precaution to protect children and staff from the harmful effects of exposure to the sun while they are at the Service or at any event organised by the Service.
- Ensure all children, educators and staff have some UV exposure for vitamin D.

The *Sun Protection Policy* is consistent with the Cancer Council's SunSmart recommendations for outdoor environments, clothing, sunscreen, scheduling of activities, and ongoing education for the children, families and staff at the Service.

- The sun protection measures listed below are used for all outdoor activities during the daily sun protection times (whenever UV levels reach 3 and above), typically from **mid-August to the end of April** in Victoria.
- To assist with the implementation of this policy, educators and children are encouraged to access the daily local sun protection times at sunsmart.com.au via the SunSmart widget on the service's website or via the free SunSmart app. The sun protection times are a forecast from the Bureau of Meteorology for the time of day UV levels are forecast to reach 3 or higher. At these levels, sun protection is recommended for all skin types. In Victoria, UV levels regularly reach 3 or higher from mid-August to the end of April.

Strategies and practices

- The *Sun Protection Policy* is explained to parents when they enrol their child in the Service, and their attention is specifically drawn to their responsibilities under this Policy.
- The sun safety message is promoted and positively reinforced amongst families through Foyer display, daily communication with parents at drop-off/pick-up and providing them with up-to-date SunSmart materials.
- Educators promote sun safety awareness in children by including it in daily routines and intentional teaching such as role-modelling, discussions, songs, stories, games, and SunSmart resources.
- The Service adopts the 'No Hat, No Outdoor Play' policy, to remind children the importance of sun safety while outdoors. Children who choose not to wear a hat will need to play in shaded areas.

Sun Protection & Heat – Service Supplies Hat

- The Service’s outdoor playground is adequately shaded. The built and natural shade features are continuously evaluated for effectiveness and, if required, additional shade structures are built and trees planted.
- Children play outdoors at the discretion of the educators who take into account the weather and are guided by the routines and children’s interests. Where possible, active, outdoor sun safe play is encouraged throughout the day.
- From mid-August to the end of April and whenever the UV index is three or higher, outdoor activities will be conducted using a combination of sun protection measures.
- Educators set up activities in the shade, wherever possible, and actively encourage children to play in the shade. At times when the weather becomes too hot, educators move play to protected and shady areas, such as verandahs, or inside.
- All staff model positive SunSmart behaviour to the children by:
 - wearing broad-brimmed styled hats and appropriate clothing for all outdoor activities
 - using SPF 50+ broad-spectrum, water resistant sunscreen
 - seeking shade whenever possible
 - wearing sunglasses that meet the Australian Standard (AS/NZS1067:2003).
- The Service supplies 50+ broad-spectrum water-resistant sunscreen for children and staff. The sunscreen is available in each room and in the outdoor play area. Parents are advised upon enrolment about the use and brand of sunscreen, and receive a reminder annually. Parents are required to notify the Service in writing if their child is allergic to sunscreen, and to supply an alternative clearly labeled with the child’s name.
- The Service provides all Children and Staff with a hat that protects their face, neck and ears (ie; broad brimmed or bucket) and complies with the SunSmart guidelines.
- Agency staff are required to supply their own hat that protects their face, neck and ears (ie; broad brimmed or bucket) and complies with the SunSmart guidelines.
- Educators ensure children wear clothes with adequate protection from UV when playing outdoors. The Cancer Council recommends loose fitting clothes with collars and sleeves that covers as much skin as possible, closely woven natural fibre fabric, and of a dark colour.
- Water is offered to children frequently throughout the day regardless of whether they are indoors or outdoors.
- If your child’s room is already outdoors playing, Parents are asked to liberally apply a 50+ broad-spectrum water resistant sunscreen to all exposed areas of their children’s skin on arrival at the Service.
- Educators liberally apply broad spectrum sunscreen with an SPF of 50+ to all exposed areas of children’s skin 20 minutes before the children go outside and complete Sunscreen Record Chart.
- Educators reapply sunscreen every two hours if children are outdoors for a prolonged period, or more frequently if the children are perspiring or involved with water play. Older children apply their own sunscreen under supervision.
- If parents supply their child with sunglasses that are wrap-around and/or are close fitting (that meet AS 1067-EPF 10 is best), educators will ensure children wear them during outdoor play.

- Educators are kept up-to-date with SunSmart recommendations.

Additional safe resting practices for babies

- Babies under the age of 12 months are kept out of direct sunlight as a matter of course. However, when outdoors, for babies over 6 months, a small amount of sunscreen is applied only to those exposed areas not already covered by clothing or hats.
- For babies 6wks - 12 months we ask parents to supply a hat for their child for outdoor play.

Responsibilities of parents

- To apply sunscreen to their child on arrival at the Service.
- (For Parents of babies up to 12months)- To provide a SunSmart hat for their child each time their child attends the Service, and to ensure the hat is clearly named and kept clean.
- To dress their child in SunSmart clothing, including spares, each time the child attends the Service.
- To model positive SunSmart behaviour to the children when at the Service.
- To notify the Service in writing if their child is allergic to sunscreen, and to supply an alternative sunscreen clearly labelled with the child's name.

Links to other policies

- Clothing Policy
- Educational Program Policy
- Enrolment and Orientation Policy
- Excursion Policy

Sources

- Education and Care Services National Regulations 2011.
- Guide to the National Quality Standard 2018.
- Shaw, M. (2011). *Keeping sun safe in child care*. <http://ncac.acecqa.gov.au/educator-resources/pcf-articles/KeepingSunSafeMar2011.pdf> accessed 24 November 2013

Further reading and useful websites

- SunSmart- <http://www.sunsmart.com.au/>

Policy review

The Service encourages staff and parents to be actively involved in the annual review of each of its policies and procedures. In addition, the Service will accommodate any new legislative changes as they occur, and any issues identified as part the Service's commitment to quality improvement. The Service consults with relevant recognised authorities as part of the annual review to ensure the policy contents are consistent with current research and contemporary views on best practice.