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PARENT HEALTH BULLETIN

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THIS MONTH'S TOPIC:

PROTECTING YOUR FAMILY FROM THE SUN

Now that summer is quickly approaching and days are getting hotter, it is important to protect our families from the sun. Sun exposure is important. It helps plants and flowers grow, and it helps us too! The sun actually provides us with vitamin D, which helps build stronger bones. It does not take a lot of time in the sun to get the needed amount of vitamin D.

If we do not protect our skin from the sun, we may get a sunburn.

Unprotected sun exposure can lead to:

- Skin damage (sunburn)
- Eye damage
- Skin cancer

If you have ever had a sunburn, you may remember it being itchy or even painful. Certain skin types tend to get sunburn easier than others. If you or someone in your family has light colored skin, eyes, or hair, it is more likely that a sunburn may occur to that person.

The sun's rays are stronger during certain parts of the day. The sun is the highest overhead and therefore the strongest from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. During these times, extra care should be taken to prevent sunburn. However, most sun damage



comes from day-to-day exposure, not being out in the sun at the beach, pool, or lake. Remember that you and your family could still get a sunburn when the day is cool or cloudy!

Wearing sunscreen

You may notice there are many sunscreens made for kids. Some have scents, some have colors, some spray on, and some are water and sweat proof. These are great if your child does not have sensitive skin. However, what matters

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Put sunscreen on at least 15 to 30 minutes before going out.

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most is the amount of protection against the sun's rays that the sunscreen provides.

When choosing a sunscreen make sure to get a SPF or Sun Protection Factor of 30 or higher for children. Choose a "broad-spectrum" sunscreen that protects against two types of the sun's rays — UVA and UVB.

To get all of the benefits, sunscreen must be used correctly.

- Use sunscreen whenever you and your family will be out in the sun.
- Put the sunscreen on at least 15 to 30 minutes before going out.
- Put sunscreen on any uncovered skin. Do not forget the hands, ears, feet, shoulders, and the back of the neck.
- Reapply sunscreen about every 2 hours or after swimming or sweating.

Take a break

Remember, the sun is strongest from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. It is important to protect you and your family from the sun's rays during this time. Taking a break from the sun is a good way to protect the skin. Go inside for lunch or a nap. You may also choose to do some indoor activities. If you are at an all-day outdoor activity, make sure to sit in the shade to get a break from the sun. If your family has a big umbrella or a tent that can give shade, bring it along.

Proper clothing shields the skin from the rays. Even though you may not be outside all day, wear light colored long pants and shirts if possible. Sunglasses are important for protecting the eyes from the sun.

If someone in the family gets sunburned

You may not know right away if you or someone in your family has a sunburn. The person may feel fine all day, but as the evening comes he may start to feel a sunburn. It may even be painful. Here are a few sunburn tips:

- Gently apply a cool (not cold) cloth to the burned areas or take a cool bath.
- Put pure aloe vera gel on any sunburned areas. You can purchase the gel at most pharmacies.
- If the skin blisters or the burn is severe, call your doctor.
- Stay out of the sun until the burn is healed. Returning to the sun may make the burn worse.

Be a good role model yourself — wear sunscreen, wear sunglasses, and limit your time in the sun.



REFERENCES:

- The Skin Cancer Foundation. Accessed at <http://www.skincancer.org/>
- Kids Health: Sun Safety (2010). The Nemours Foundation. <http://www.kidshealth.org/>

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