



Sunscreen tips for early childhood

Protecting skin from ultraviolet (UV) radiation

A wide-brimmed hat can protect from direct UV but UV is also reflected and scattered on to the face which is why sunscreen application on the face and neck is also needed.

If children are wearing cool, loose-fitting covering clothing made of densely woven fabric to help protect the skin, only a small amount of sunscreen needs to be applied to any skin not already covered such as the lower arms and legs.

Which sunscreen?

Choose SPF30 (or higher) broad-spectrum, water-resistant sunscreen. Make sure it is within its expiry date and is stored below 30 degrees.

A sensitive or toddler formula is usually best for young children.

How should we apply sunscreen?

Please ensure sunscreen is applied with adult help or supervision.

It is best to apply a generous amount of sunscreen to any exposed skin around 20 minutes before going outdoors. Sunscreen should be reapplied every two hours even if the stated level of water resistance is four hours.

Advice from the National Health and Medical Research Council states that children who are able to apply their own sunscreen (under supervision) should be encouraged to do so. This fosters independence and responsibility.

For children unable to apply their own sunscreen, it is recommended that if a carer is doing 'mass sunscreen applying' they should wash their hands before and after the task.

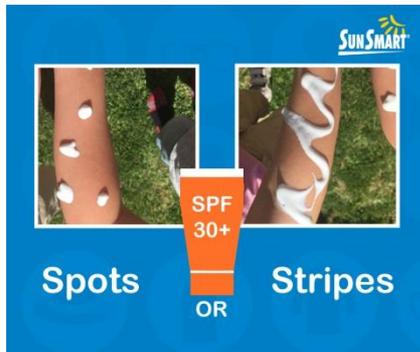
They can use a different tissue for each child when applying the sunscreen, however, unless the child (or the carer) has a visible skin disease or a cold/virus, it is not really an infection-control issue.

If a child does have a visible skin disease (e.g. eczema or open skin wound or a cold/virus) their sunscreen should be applied last, washing hands before and after the task or using gloves or a tissue if preferred.

Sunscreen ideas for early childhood

- Ask parents/carers to note in the registration/attendance book that they have applied sunscreen at or before drop-off so educators can be sure a base layer has been applied and children are ready to play outside.
- To help develop independent skills ready for school, encourage children from three years of age to apply their own sunscreen under supervision.
- Appoint sunscreen buddies so children can help each other apply.
- Have sunscreen monitors.
- Set up sunscreen stations – with a mirror and cloth for wiping hands. See our [sunscreen station video](#). Ensure these are monitored and supervised.





- Store sunscreen in a cool, dry place – not in direct sun.
- Research indicates pump packs are easier for young children to use. They can pump a few dots of sunscreen into the palm of one hand and then use the pointer finger on their other hand to add dots of sunscreen to their face. The hand with the sunscreen can then be rubbed on the arm and leg.
- Encourage children to put a dot of sunscreen on each cheek, their nose and chin and rub it in (avoiding the eye area) with squiggles on their arms and legs.
- Post reminder notes/posters near the door. Perhaps children could make these themselves.
- Play the [SunSmart Countdown](#) or [You've got to be SunSmart](#) song to remind children to apply sunscreen and grab their hat before outdoor play.
- Create a sunscreen application chart with each child's name to keep track of applications. Add a sticker or mark each time sunscreen is applied. The educator can then easily see if all children have had a sunscreen top-up.
- Style up your sunscreen – ask children to decorate the group sunscreen pump pack or personalise their own sunscreen bottle/tube and display it with pride ready to be applied. [View some suggestions.](#)
- Download the free [SunSmart app](#) – it shows the daily sun protection times and you can also set the sunscreen reminder.
- Add the [SunSmart widget](#) to the service's website so everyone can check the daily sun protection times and see when they need to use sun protection each day.

- Use the [SunSmart resources](#) including songs, games, animations and learning opportunities to help children understand the importance of sunscreen and other sun protection measures.
- Remember educator and parent role modelling – children can watch and copy your sunscreen application technique.
- If a service chooses to supply sunscreen it is recommended they notify parents/carers of the type of sunscreen provided and the ingredients included.



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