

# healthy hood river

**HAHRC BEATS**

## Help prevent skin cancer risk by protecting your child now



File photo

**PROTECT CHILDREN** from increased risk of skin cancer later by applying sunscreen now.

**BY CHESEA RUDER**

Mid Columbia Children's Council

Just a few serious sunburns can increase your child's risk of skin cancer later in life. Kids don't have to be at the pool, beach, or on vacation to get too much sun. Their skin needs protection from the sun's harmful ultraviolet (UV) rays whenever they're outdoors.

Seek shade. UV rays are strongest and most harmful during midday. So it's best to plan indoor activities then. If this is not possible, seek shade under a tree, an umbrella, or a pop-up tent. Use these options to prevent sunburn, and not to seek relief after it has happened.

Cover up. Long-sleeved shirts and long pants and skirts can protect from UV rays. Clothes made from tightly woven fabric offer the best protection. A wet T-shirt offers much less UV protection than a dry one, and darker colors may offer more protection than lighter colors. Some clothing certified under international standards comes with information on its ultraviolet protection factor:

Get a hat. Hats that shade the face, scalp, ears, and neck are easy to use and give great protection. Baseball caps are popular among kids, but they don't protect their ears and neck. If your child chooses a cap, be sure to protect exposed areas with sunscreen.

Wear sunglasses. They protect your child's eyes from UV rays, which can lead to cataracts later in life. Look for sunglasses that wrap around and block as close to 100% of both UVA and UVB rays as possible.

Apply sunscreen. Use sunscreen with at least SPF 15 and UVA as well as UVB protection every time your child goes outside. For the best protection, apply sunscreen generously 30 minutes before going outdoors. Don't forget to protect ears, noses, lips, and the tops of feet. Take sunscreen with you to reapply during the day, especially after your child swims or exercises. This applies to waterproof and water-resistant products as well.

using a sunscreen product on babies less than 6 months old. All products do not have the same ingredients; if your or your child's skin reacts badly to one product, try another one or call a doctor. Your baby's best defense against sunburn is avoiding the sun or staying in the shade.

Keep in mind, sunscreen is not meant to allow kids to spend more time in the sun than they would otherwise. Try combining sunscreen with other options, like playing in the shade, to prevent skin damage. By taking action now, you can help prevent your child's risk of skin cancer later in life!

*Healthy Active Hood River County (HAHRC) is our community healthy living coalition. We promote wellness through increased physical activity, healthy eating, tobacco use prevention, behavioral health, prevention of addictions and policy and environmental change. Join us at our next meeting, July 28, 11:30 a.m.-1 p.m. at Providence Hood River Hospital Boardroom.*

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