



Summertime Safety

By U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 7

Keeping Kids Safe From Sun And Smog

If you spend time with kids in the summer, you want to keep them safe while providing fun outdoor experiences. Did you know that overexposure to the sun and air pollution can pose serious health effects, especially to children? You can take several simple actions to protect kids – and yourself.

What You Can Do

Check the daily UV Index and Air Quality Index, and follow the simple steps described below to protect kids' health.

Check the UV Index. The UV Index is a daily forecast of the strength of the sun's UV radiation. Find out the risk every day at <http://www.epa.gov/sunwise/uvindex.html> or you can download the UV Index App to your smart phone at <http://www.epa.gov/enviro/mobile/>

Check the Air Quality Index. The Air Quality Index (AQI) is a scale used by state and local air agencies to report how clean or polluted the air is, and what associated health effects might be a concern to you. Visit <http://airnow.gov/> Choose your state and local area for real-time animated maps, forecasts, and the previous day's peak ozone level.

Actions You Can Take

Model SunWise behavior. The SunWise Program is an environmental and health education program that aims to teach children and their caregivers how to protect themselves from overexposure to the sun through the use of classroom, school, and community-based components. To learn more, visit <http://epa.gov/sunwise/index.html>

Teach kids to Slip, Slop, Slap, and Wrap.

Slip on a shirt. Less skin exposed means less skin damage.

Slop on sunscreen. Twenty minutes before heading outside, generously apply products of at least SPF 15, and re-apply every 2 hours or after swimming or sweating.

Slap on a hat. Find a hat you like and wear it.

Wrap on sunglasses. Look for ones that block 99–100% of UVA and UVB rays.

Seek shade. Especially when the sun is most intense, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Rotate players to allow breaks in the shade. This is most important when the UV Index is 6 or above.

Sun Safety Tips While Playing Outdoors



It's fun to play in the sun, but did you know that too much sun can be bad for you? If you ever had sunburn, you have felt some of the bad effects of too much sun and ultraviolet (UV) radiation.

Too many UV rays can cause more serious health effects too, such as skin cancer; older looking skin, and other skin problems; cataracts and other eye damage; and weakening of the immune system.

Children need sun protection education since too much sun when you are young may lead to skin cancer later in life.

The good news is that you can prevent UV radiation from hurting you.



When the Air Quality Index reports unhealthy levels, limit physical exertion outdoors. In many places, ozone peaks in mid-afternoon to early evening. Change the time of day of strenuous outdoor activity to avoid these hours, or reduce the intensity of the activity.

Pay attention to symptoms. Know how to recognize symptoms of respiratory discomfort, such as coughing, wheezing, and breathing difficulty, and reduce exposure if these occur.

Rotate players in physically exerting games. Rest players to reduce exertion.

Provide alternative activities. Allow kids that have asthma or other respiratory problems to participate in activities that are less physical when pollution levels are high. If pollution levels are particularly high, move physical activities indoors where the air is filtered by an air conditioning system.

Be vigilant about asthma management. People with asthma should have adequate medication on hand and follow their asthma management plans.

For more information, contact EPA at 800-223-0425.

To inquire about managing your child's asthma, and for more information on safe and healthy homes and how to receive a healthy homes assessment, contact Children's Mercy Hospital at 816-855-1895.

To inquire about getting your child tested for lead poisoning and for more information on resources to rid your home of lead hazards, contact the Kansas City, Missouri Health Department at 816-513-6048.



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Get SunWise Certified.

Coaches and counselors: Get free training on-line at <http://cfpub.epa.gov/sunwiserec/>

Parents: Encourage those looking out for your kids to get certified to demonstrate their knowledge of safety procedures.