

Sun Safety Activities for Infants and Toddlers



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Infant & Toddler Activities

Sun-safety education should be modeled and talked about while incorporating it into daily routines for infants and toddlers. Language and action together can introduce the concept of taking care of the body.

The following learning activities are included in this section:

- Wearing Clothing
- Hats Galore
- Fun and Sun Glasses
- Shade Play
- Wearing Sunscreen
- Sun Safety Song

The main message for infants and toddlers is “Your skin protects you. I will help you protect your skin.” Begin to introduce the idea of “You should protect your skin.” to toddlers, who are typically in the stage of autonomy (“Do it myself!”).

While learning about sun safety, infants and toddlers hear new vocabulary words and see that you protect them. Teaching sun safety provides opportunities for toddlers to begin developing skills such as communication, self-help, fine motor, and gross motor.

Children learn by example, so adults should practice sun-safety every day. Include infants and toddlers to the degree that they are ready. Infants need frequent and caring communication and toddlers need many opportunities for physical activity and independence.

These activities were developed for the Sun Safety Alliance by Dr. Connie Jo Smith, Consumer and Family Sciences Department, and Dr. Amy Hood-Hooten, Training and Technical Assistance Services, Western Kentucky University.



Wearing Clothing

Infant/Toddler Activity

- Gather a collection of children's protective clothing and maintain as a community chest. As infants and toddlers prepare to go outside, caregivers should ensure that the clothes they wear are protective. If not, utilize clothing from the community chest so that children are dressed appropriately for outdoors.
- Caregivers can talk to infants and toddlers about their clothes and how it protects them from the sun. Toddlers can help dress themselves in sun-safe clothes as caregivers talk to them about how the sun can shine through some clothes and hurt the skin.

Materials:

Clothes basket or other container; wide variety of protective clothing for children.

Other Ideas:

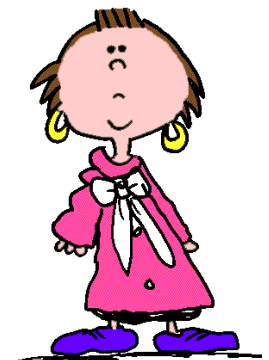
- Add sun-safe clothes to the dramatic play activity area. Encourage conversation about which garments better protect the skin.
- Show children clothing and accessories (umbrellas, boots, rain coats, ear muffs, etc.) and tell them how to use each item to protect them from the sun and other weather elements.

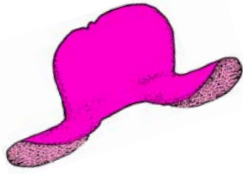
Family Involvement:

Inform parents and guardians about the importance of "cover-up" (long) clothing in protecting skin from the sun. Invite them to loan you a garment to use when talking to children. Be sure clothing is labeled, cared for, and returned unharmed.

Additional Information:

Be sure to launder clothing from the community chest each time it is worn, with special attention to hats. Also, clothing in the dramatic play area should be washed regularly.





Hats Galore

Toddler Activity

- Gather a collection of wide-brimmed, sun-protective hats. Hats with neck flaps are also recommended.
- Place the hat collection in the dramatic play activity area and encourage children to play with them.
- During their play, tell children that it is important to wear hats while playing outside to protect them from sun.

Materials:

Collection of washable hats and container for storage.

Other Ideas:

- Include a variety of books and pictures in the classroom that show people and children wearing hats. When you use the books or look at pictures with the children, explain that people are wearing hats to be safe from the sun.
- Provide a wide range of baby doll hats in the dramatic play area. Encourage children to use hats to protect the dolls from the sun.
- Take photographs of the children (individual or small groups) in your class wearing wide-brimmed hats. Display photographs to look at and talk about.

Family Involvement:

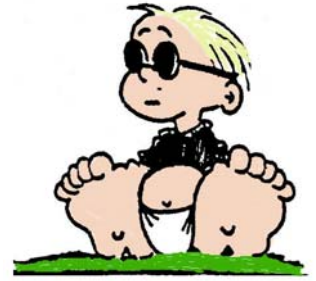
Inform parents and guardians about the importance of hats to protect against the sun. Suggest that they help their children examine hats for sun protection quality the next time they go shopping or look at catalogs.

Additional Information:

When using hats in the classroom, make sure that safety and sanitation measures are followed to prevent spread of communicable disease such as ringworm or lice. All hats should be washable. If children try on hats, the hats should be washed at the end of the day.

Fun and Sun Glasses

Toddler Activity



- Compile a box of sunglasses and place them in the dramatic play activity area. Encourage toddlers to look, touch, and talk about them.
- Tell the children that sunglasses can protect their eyes from the sun and that it is a good idea to wear them when outside.
- Encourage toddlers to try on the glasses and look in a mirror.

Materials:

Box or other container; a wide array of sunglasses.

Other Ideas:

- Purchase or get donations of children's sunglasses so that each child can have a pair of his or her own. Check labels on sunglasses to be sure they provide 100% UV protection and have safety (polycarbonate) lenses. Encourage children to wear their sunglasses when playing outdoors.
- Provide magazines, books, or pictures of people wearing sunglasses for toddlers to see.

Family Involvement:

Inform parents and guardians about the importance of sunglasses to protect eyes. Provide information on appropriate types of sunglasses, including 100% UV protection and safety (polycarbonate) lenses. Encourage families to help children look for people wearing sunglasses during outside routines, such as going to the grocery store.

Additional Information:

When using sunglasses in the classroom, make sure that safety and sanitation measures are followed. All sunglasses should have plastic or unbreakable lenses. If children try on sunglasses, they should be sanitized at the end of the day.

Shade Play

Infant/Toddler Activity

- Infants and toddlers need daily opportunities to play outdoors. The infant/toddler outdoor play area should include a shady area such as under a tree or in a gazebo, etc.
- During outdoor play, guide children to these shady areas often. Infants should to be taken there by their caregivers, while toddlers may be directed to these areas to play.
- Explain to children that they need some shade time so they can be safe from sunburn and skin damage.

Important: Infants under 6 months of age should not be exposed to direct sunlight or reflected sun rays. Sand, concrete, water, and snow can reflect rays onto infants and children, even under a tree.

Materials:

Outdoor space with both sun and shade.

Other Ideas:

Take appropriate materials outdoors such as books, puzzles, etc. for shade play.

Family Involvement:

Inform families about the importance of shade in sun protection. Encourage them to play outdoors with their children while seeking to stay under shade. Encourage families to help children distinguish between shady and sunny areas.

Additional Information:

If the outdoor area has no shady area, create temporary shade spaces by using blankets, sheets, parachutes, tarps, or other available materials.



Wearing Sunscreen

Infant/Toddler Activity

Important: Infants under 6 months of age should not be exposed to direct sunlight or reflected sun rays. Remember, the UV rays come through even on cloudy days.

It is important that infants and toddlers be protected from the sun. The best protection comes from wearing cover-up clothing and a wide-brimmed hat, and staying in the shade. Do not apply sunscreen to children under 6 months old without written direction from a medical provider.

- As daily routines are so important in the infant curriculum, infant caregivers can use the diapering/toileting routine prior to outdoor play as a time to apply sunscreen to exposed areas on the infants and toddlers. During this routine, explain to the child what you are doing and why you are applying sunscreen.
- Sunscreen should only be applied to small areas of exposed skin, such as the hands.
- Apply SPF 15 lip balm to the child's lips.

Materials:

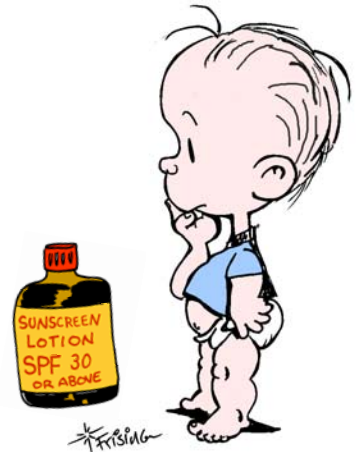
Sunscreen and personal lip balm.

Other Ideas:

Sunscreen can be applied during other daily routines as this is a self-help skill they are encouraging among children.

Family involvement:

Inform parents and guardians about the importance of sunscreen use for children of all ages. Many early childhood settings require parental consent and a medical provider's statement before staff members are allowed to apply sunscreen.



Sun Safety Song

Infant/Toddler Activity

- Make up a song using words or terms about sun safety such as wearing a hat, wearing sunglasses, playing in the shade, and wearing sunscreen, etc. Throughout the day sing the song to the children; as they get older, they will sing with you. Songs can be sung to familiar tunes such as “If You’re Happy and You Know It” or “Old MacDonald Had A Farm.”
- Continue to add words or verses to the class song that describe sun-safe practices.

Other Ideas:

- Each month take a picture of children practicing sun safety and add it to a class book along with any story children share about the protection activity. At the end of the year, there will be a class picture book of sun safety throughout the year.
- Utilize materials and pictures in the classroom that show people practicing sun safety in all activity areas. Encourage conversation about the materials when children are working with them

Example: (sung to Old MacDonald Had a Farm)

I am sun-safe all day long, Ee ii ee ii oo
I wear a hat to shade my face. Ee ii ee ii oo
With a floppy hat here, and a floppy hat there,
Here a hat, there a hat, everywhere a floppy hat,
I am sun-safe all day long, Ee ii ee ii oo



Family Involvement:

Print or type the class sun-safety song and send a copy to families so they can sing it at home. Encourage families to make up new songs and send them to the classroom. Provide families with information on a regular basis about sun safety for all children. This information can be shared in weekly notes sent home, newsletters, and parent conferences, etc.