

Why Early Childhood Centers need sun protection policies.



Sun Protection in Early Childhood Centers

Excessive exposure to ultraviolet radiation (UVR) during childhood and adolescence is a risk factor for skin cancer later in life. New Zealand, along with Australia, has the highest melanoma rates in the world. Episodes of sunburn, particularly in childhood and adolescence, also increase the risk of melanoma later in life.

An emphasis on sun protection and skin cancer prevention in early childhood centers is important for two reasons:

- Centers are places where children spend much of their time during the High UVR months of September to March inclusive.
- Centers provide opportunities through staff professional development and children's activities, for both staff and children to learn about sun protection.

Comprehensive sun protection policy

A Sun protection policy needs to:

- outline the way in which the center will protect students and staff from the harmful effects of excessive ultraviolet radiation (UVR)
- include behaviour, environment and policy review.
- be developed in consultation with parents and caregivers.

Sample sun protection policy

The following sample sun protection policy covers all essential sun protection strategies necessary to protect children from excessive sun exposure.

We encourage centers to copy this policy directly or incorporate all of the main points into their own sun protection policy.

Sample Sun Protection Policy Early Childhood Center



Centres/Preschools are welcome to copy this SunSmart sun protection policy directly and use it as their own or incorporate all of the main points into their own sun protection policy.

Rationale

Excessive exposure to ultraviolet radiation (UVR) from the sun causes sunburn, skin damage and increases the risk of skin cancer. New Zealand, along with Australia, has the highest melanoma rates in the world. One or more episodes of sunburn in childhood and adolescence have been shown to increase the risk of melanoma later in life.

This policy is followed whenever ultraviolet index (UVI) levels reach 3 and above. For most parts of New Zealand this is from the beginning of September until the end of March, especially between 11 am and 4 pm.

The Cancer Society recognises that a balance is required between avoiding an increase in the risk of skin cancer and getting enough sun exposure for children to maintain adequate vitamin D levels, particularly in the winter months. Between April and August the UVI is **3 or under** in most parts of New Zealand, especially in the south, so it is recommended that children do **NOT** wear hats, sunscreen or play in the shade during these months. During the winter months, encourage children to actively enjoy the sun.

This policy is adopted from (DATE) so that children attending (NAME OF CENTER) are protected from harmful UVR from the sun.

Aim

<Name of centre / pre-school>'s SunSmart policy has been developed to ensure that all children and staff are protected from damaging levels of UVR from the sun.

Our Sun Protection strategies:

All children and staff use a combination of sun protection measures whenever UV Index levels are 3 and above. Particular care is taken during the daylight savings months (between 11 am and 4 pm) when UV levels reach their peak.

1. Shade

There are natural shelters (eg trees) and other shade areas providing enough coverage for all children playing outside.

The availability of shade is considered when planning excursions and outdoor activities.

Children are to use available areas of shade when outside. Children who do not have appropriate hats or outdoor clothing are required to play in the shade or indoors.

2. Clothing

When outside, children are to wear loose fitting clothing that covers as much skin as possible. Tops with elbow length sleeves, and if possible, collars and knee length or longer style shorts and skirts are best.

3. Hats

Children are required to wear hats that protect their face, neck and ears, i.e. legionnaire, broad-brimmed (min 7.5 cms brim) or deep crown bucket hat (minimum 5 cm brim). (Please note: Baseball caps do not offer enough protection and are therefore not recommended.) It is recommended that the centre provide a personal sunhat for each child to use.

4. Sunscreen

It is recommended that SPF 30+, broad spectrum sunscreen is available for staff and children's use. Sunscreen is applied at least 15-20 minutes before going outdoors and reapplied every two hours. It must not be used to extend time outside. If children are playing in water, sunscreen must also be water resistant.

5. Sunglasses

A good hat significantly reduces the level of UVR reaching the eyes. If parents want their children to also wear sunglasses, these should be close fitting and cover as much of the eye area as possible. Sunglasses should meet the Aus/NZ Standard 1067.

Role Modelling

Staff act as role models by:

- wearing sun protective hats and clothing, and sunglasses when outside
- applying SPF 30+ broad spectrum sunscreen
- seeking shade whenever possible

Sharing Information about Sun Protection

The children learn about skin and ways to protect their skin from the sun. The sun protection policy is reinforced through staff and children's activities, and centre/pre-school displays. Staff and families are provided with information on sun protection at enrolment and through family newsletters, notice boards and meetings.

When enrolling their child, families are:

- Informed of the centre / pre-school's sun protection policy
- Asked to ensure their child wears sun protective clothing (and to provide a suitable hat if the centre does not provide one).

- Asked to provide SPF 30+, broad spectrum, water-resistant sunscreen for their child
- Required to give permission for staff to apply sunscreen to their child
- Encouraged to practice SunSmart behaviours themselves when at the centre / pre-school and in the home environment

Review

Management and staff monitor and review the effectiveness of the sun protection policy every two years and revise the policy when required.

Policy Prepared by: Name or title on (Date)

Policy approved by: Name or title on (Date)

Policy will be reviewed on (Date)

For further information about sun protection, please contact your [local Cancer Society](#) or email Cancer Society at: admin@cancer.org.nz: