

## Sun Safety for Parents/Carers for Children in Primary Schools

### Why is sun safety important?

#### Did you know that?

- Over recent years skin cancer has become much more common. Rates are more than 4 times higher than they were in the late 1970s in Great Britain. Melanoma skin cancer is now the 5<sup>th</sup> most common cancer overall in the UK
- Over exposure to UV light is the main cause of skin cancer. UV light comes from the sun as well as from artificial tanning sunbeds and sunlamps.
- 86% of melanoma skin cancer cases in the UK are **preventable**
- Exposing your child to too much sun may increase their risk of skin cancer later in life.

If your shadow is shorter than you, you could burn!

**Remember your child needs to wear sun protection at school.** Make sure you put lots on them before they go. If school asks you to send extra sunscreen it needs to be in a labelled bottle. It's advisable to wear it on overcast and cloudy days too.

You don't have to buy expensive brands, **cheap ones are fine** as long as they are at least **factor 15 and UVA 4 star rated** (the stars are usually on the back of the bottle in a circle)

Check the expiry date on your sunscreen – most only last a year or 2. Make sure you store it in a cool place or the protective chemicals can be ruined.

Always remember vulnerable areas like ears, back of hands, neck and feet. **Use sunscreen together with shade and clothing** to avoiding getting caught out by sunburn

**Hats:** Wide brimmed or legionnaire styles offer the most protection

**Shade is best for children** – encourage them to play in shady areas at break and lunchtimes when the sun is out

**Sunglasses:** When choosing sunglasses look for the British Standards kite mark or CE mark. This means they offer a safe level of protection against harmful UV light. Looking directly at the sun can cause permanent damage to the back of the eye and so should be avoided.

**The Heatwave Plan for England 2018** recommended that when the temperature is 30oC+, children should not take part in vigorous physical activity. Children should also stay hydrated in the sun, water is best.

#### The Vitamin D debate

Vitamin D helps build and maintain strong bones – and we all need some sunshine to make it. So there's no need to avoid the sun altogether. Short exposures should be enough for most people (as long as they do not burn). The NHS recommends that people think about taking vitamin D supplements.

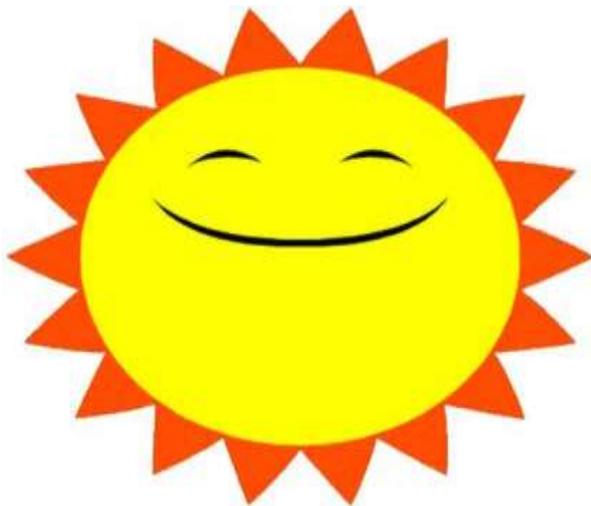
The people who should **take extra care in the sun** include those who:

- have pale, white or light brown skin
- have freckles or red or fair hair
- tend to burn rather than tan
- have many moles
- have skin problems relating to a medical condition
- have a family history of skin cancer
- have been burnt by the sun in the past

Remember if you or your child have skin changes that you are concerned about – see your GP. Changes to check for include:

- a new mole, growth or lump
- any moles, freckles, or patches of skin that change in size shape or colour

Skin cancer is much easier to treat if it is found early



Updated June 2018 by Hayley Taylor-Cox SMBC Cancer Prevention Lead

References: Cancer Research UK and NHS