

Test Your Sun Safety IQ

You've read the statistics before: Eighty percent of harmful sun exposure occurs before the age of 18. That's why you're careful to slather sunscreen on your child when she's at the beach or pool. But how sun-smart are you when it comes to the nitty-gritty of deciphering SPF's, picking the best sunscreen, or treating a mild sunburn? Take our quiz find out whether you're doing enough to protect your child from the sun's damaging rays —and reduce her risk of skin cancer later in life.

1. True or false: Babies younger than 6 months shouldn't wear sunscreen.

Answer False. It's safe for infants younger than 6 months to wear minimal amounts of sunscreen on small areas such as the face and neck. In general, however, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) advises keeping a baby younger than 6 months out of the sun. "Babies are more prone than adults to sunburn because their skin is thinner

and their body's protective tanning response isn't developed," explains Jim Chow, M.D., associate director of the division of dermatology at the University of South Carolina School of Medicine, in Columbia.

If you can't avoid sun exposure, use a broad-spectrum sunscreen on your infant with a sun-protection factor (SPF) of 15 or higher that contains titanium dioxide or zinc oxide. These key ingredients physically block the sun's harmful UVA and UVB rays without irritating your baby's sensitive skin.

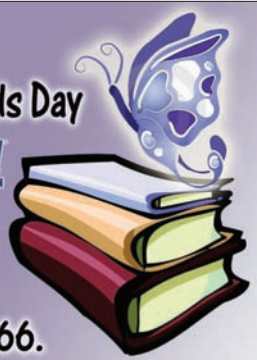
2. Which is better at protecting kids from the sun? (A) Sun block, (B) Sunscreen, or (C) Both can be effective

Answer C. Both products can protect kids from UVA and UVB rays. For years, the terms "sun block" and "sunscreen" have been used interchangeably on products. However, the Food and Drug Administration now requires all over-the-counter sun-protection products to simply be labeled "sunscreen." For a child older than 6 months, choose a waterproof broad-spectrum sunscreen of SPF 15 or higher that contains titanium dioxide, zinc oxide, or avobenzone. Avoid sunscreens with PABA or built-in bug repellent, which can irritate skin.

3. Your child is highest risk for sunburn: (A) At the beach, (b) At the pool, (C) On a hike in the mountains, or (D) At the playground

Answer A, B and C. All are serious sunburn spots. In or near the water, harmful rays from above and those reflecting off of the water deliver a double whammy of UV rays. At high altitudes, the sun's rays are also more dangerous to your

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child because they're more concentrated. The sun is less of a threat on the playground because some rays are absorbed by the dark surface-but children will still get burned if you don't apply sunscreen.

4. Kids need to start wearing sunglasses: (A) At 6 months of age, (B) At 6 years of age, or (C) When they're old enough to read

Answer A. Start putting mini sunglasses on your child at 6 months-if she'll keep them on. Pint-size sunglasses that filter out 99 to 100 percent of the sun's UVA and UV rays (the label will say so) can help reduce your child's risk of age-related cataracts. "Your eye remembers the sun damage you get as a child," says John B. Jeffers, M.D., program director for ophthalmology at Wills Eye Hospital, in Philadelphia, PA.

5. True or false: A sunscreen with a SPF of 30 protects your child twice as long as one with an SPF of 15.

Answer False. A sunscreen with a 30 SPF blocks 96 to 97 percent of the sun's rays, only 2 to 3 percent more than a sunscreen with a SPF of 15 does. Still, if your kids will be in the sun for at least two hours, choose the higher number. "The extra 2 to 3 percent of protection can make a difference," says Kathleen Behr, M.D., a dermatologist and skin cancer specialist at the UCLA Dermatology Center.

6. The best way to soothe a child's mild sunburn is to: (A) apply a thin layer of petroleum jelly, (B) have her take a bath, then put on moisturizer, (C) just leave the skin alone; it will heal faster by itself

Answer B. The bath will cool your child off, and a basic moisturizer (doctors like Lubriderm and Keri) helps

replenish her dried-out skin. To reduce inflammation, give her children's ibuprofen within the first 48 hours. And keep her out of the sun until her sunburn is healed. If your baby gets burned, give her juice or water to replace lost fluids and call your pediatrician immediately. A severe sunburn in an infant can be dangerous. †

Sandra Gordon (www.sandrajgordon.com) writes frequently about health for Family Circle, Prevention, and Parents. She's also the author of Consumer Reports Best Baby Products.



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