Sun protection clothing

Advise using clothing which is marked with the 40 pictogram shown here.

This will be marked on items which claim compliance with British Standard EN 13758-2 where the lowest ultraviolet protection factor value is 40 and the average UVA transmission smaller than 5%.

Explain that wear and tear, washing, stretch and wetness may affect the UV protection adversely.

Useful websites for more information
www.sunsmart.org.uk • www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk
www.cancerresearchuk.org • www.cancerhelp.org.uk
www.met-office.gov.uk/weather/uv

Sun protection clothing

Why this and the accompanying leaflet for parents and carers?

Trading standards in south west England tested sun protection clothing, sun hats and other ‘cover ups’ as part of our responsibility for enforcing General Product Safety Regulations. This advice is a result of that testing following the introduction of a sun safety standard for clothing. Few garments were available that carried the standard and, of the others, few provided much protection.

We hope this information is useful to you in your work with young families and that you will be able to circulate the leaflets for parents and carers as widely as possible.

You won’t need reminding…

Skin cancer is one of the most common cancers in Britain with nearly 70,000 new cases each year. Malignant melanoma accounts for over 7000 and 2000 people will die from it each year. The number of skin cancer cases has more than doubled since the early 1980s.

Sunburn in childhood is associated with a 50% increased risk of developing skin cancer in later life. Melanoma can affect significant numbers of young adults and is the third most common cancer in 15 to 39 year olds.

Doctors think about 4 out of 5 cases could be prevented if people took simple steps to reduce their exposure to the sun. Most exposure to Ultra Violet rays takes place in the first 18 years – if we protect people when they are young, we greatly increase their chances of avoiding skin cancer.

Young skin is delicate and easily damaged by the sun. Teaching safe sun behaviour to children and their carers helps to protect them right away and sets a good pattern for later life.
Points to make about sun safety

- **Stay in the shade.** Staying indoors or in the shade during the hottest part of the day - from 11 am to 3pm. This is important not only when you are on holiday or abroad. The sun can cause damage even through cloud and water, and can be particularly damaging in this country in May and June. Sand, water, concrete, snow, and light coloured buildings reflect the sun’s rays back at you - you may think you’re in the shade and don’t need sun protection - but you probably do!

- **Cover up.** Covering up is the best and cheapest form of sun protection. Lightweight cotton clothing is excellent. **Tightly woven fabrics help stop the sun’s harmful UV rays from penetrating to the skin.** Polo and T shirts are best, rather than vests and tops with straps, which don’t protect the vulnerable shoulders and neck. Be aware that the protective quality of clothing is reduced with washing and wearing. Wet clothes on the beach or at the pool may offer less protection.

- **Wear a hat.** The first line of defence against the sun is to find shade and wear protective clothing, including a hat. **Hats with a 6cm brim are best for children or 10 cm for teenagers and adults.** Baseball caps expose the ears and neck. A better alternative is a French legionnaire style hat that covers the vulnerable neck area.

- **Use sunscreen.** Use at least **factor 15+.** However, users of sun screen will only get its benefits if they know how to use it properly. It should be applied 15 - 30 minutes before going in the sun, and slapped on generously. It needs to be replaced at least every 2 hours, and more frequently if the child has been swimming, or has been sweating. And should a child be out in the sun for 2 hours anyway? Sunscreen is not an armour that allows parents or carers to forget about the sun. Sun screen should NEVER be used to let a child stay out in the sun longer than they would without it. Make sure the sunscreen is ‘broad spectrum’, water resistant and of at least factor 15+. The good news is that cheap sunscreen gives just as much protection as the most expensive on the market - so there’s no excuse for being mean with it or keeping it beyond its expiry date.

- **Wear sunglasses.** All sunglasses should bear the CE mark and should preferably conform to **BS EN 1836.** ‘Fashion’ and ‘toy’ sunglasses may not offer this level of protection. Advise a careful check before buying.

- **Don’t forget.** It takes all of these things to protect children, not just one. A sunburnt child is a child with a damaged skin.

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Top safety tips for parents and carers in the sun smart message

- **S**tay in the shade between 11 and 3
- **M**ake sure you never burn
- **A**lways cover up
- **R**emember to take extra care with children
- **T**hen use factor 15+ sunscreen