



**BC Cancer Agency**

CARE + RESEARCH

*An agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority*

## Prevention Programs

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# be a sun-safe FACILITY

The BC Cancer Agency Prevention Programs recognizes daycares and preschools in British Columbia that work to protect children against harmful sun exposure. To receive a questionnaire and get certified, contact us at [sunsafe@preventionprograms.org](mailto:sunsafe@preventionprograms.org).

Can you answer “yes” to **6** questions about sun safety?

### 1 Does your facility limit

the amount of time children are outside in summer months? Do you have them play in the shade between 11 am and 3 pm, when too much sun is especially harmful?

### 2 Does your facility try

to avoid having children outside for extended periods around midday when the sun's rays are most damaging?

### 3 Does your facility encourage

children to wear long sleeves and hats from late spring to early fall—and especially during the summer months when there is little cloud cover?



### 4 In summer months,

does your facility encourage the use of sunscreen, assist younger children with applying it, or ask that parents provide sunscreen for those children old enough to appropriately apply it?

### 5 Is there enough shade

in your playground, whether from trees or a shade structure, for all children to avoid the sun on a very hot day?

### 6 Would you display

sun safety information, such as a poster, so that parents can pick up some sun safety tips for their children?

[www.bccancer.bc.ca/PPI/prevention](http://www.bccancer.bc.ca/PPI/prevention)  
[sunsafe@preventionprograms.org](mailto:sunsafe@preventionprograms.org)

An important part of sun safety is to create shade in outdoor play areas such as gardens, playgrounds, sandboxes, and eating areas. Shade is one of the most effective means of protecting children against sun exposure because it blocks UV radiation. However, shade alone doesn't provide 100 percent protection. Young children still need personal protection, such as sun-safe clothing, headwear, and sunscreen.

## parks and playgrounds giving kids a safe place to play



More than 50 percent of adult skin cancers can be prevented if children are properly protected from excessive sun exposure. But we know that kids also need fresh air, sunshine, and exercise. Parents, teachers, and caregivers can all encourage kids to be active outdoors and help provide them with sun-safe places to play.



When the UV index is high, it's also a good idea to schedule outdoor activities outside of the peak exposure times from 11 am to 3 pm.

Begin with a survey of your site to identify areas that are already shaded, such as those under trees or adjacent to existing buildings.

### Shade Structures

Areas where children eat and play outdoors, including playgrounds, are two sites where you should consider building shade structures if none exist. There are a wide range of options for such structures, depending on your region and your budget.

You can take advantage of existing buildings by adding overhangs or awnings from an exterior wall, or creating a breezeway or covered walkway between two buildings. A vine-covered arbor or a roofed structure are other options for an open area away from any buildings. Shade tents are another possibility, as they can be easily moved from one play area to another.

To create shade over playground equipment, sandboxes, or other irregularly shaped areas, a UV-blocking fabric cover can be a good choice. These covers, sometimes known as 'shade sails' can be

*Fabric shade sails can be installed to provide cover over play areas, sandboxes, and picnic tables.*

configured so they block the sun where exposure is greatest (usually south- and west-facing spots) and to maximize coverage when the sun is hottest.

### Trees

Trees are nature's own shade structures. Not only do they provide shade, but they also cool the air, making a more comfortable environment for children during hot weather.

But trees and shrubs don't block all of the sun's rays. Not only does some sunlight (and UV radiation) penetrate through the branches, but those rays reflect off surrounding paving, water, and sand. That's why you should never rely on trees alone to provide shade.

### Stroller Safety

Local outings provide a good opportunity to practice sun safety. All of your facility's strollers, whether multiple or single, should have adequate sunshades to protect children.





## seek, slip, slap, slop

The number of sunburns a child receives increases his or her lifetime risk of developing skin cancer. But sun damage isn't just caused by burns; overexposure to UV radiation over time causes damage that can also lead to skin cancer. Whether going on field trips or just out in the playground, all children should always:

**seek...**shade and limit sun exposure between 11 am and 3 pm.

**slip...**into comfortable, lightweight clothing.

**slap...**on a broad-brimmed hat.

**slop...**on broad-spectrum sunscreen with SPF 30+ to exposed areas of skin.

(Sunscreen can irritate the eyes of infants under six months old, so use it only on small areas of an infant's skin and only if necessary. Protect babies with clothing, a hat, and shade.)



## All-Season Sun Safety

☀ You don't have to head for the tropics to get a winter sunburn. Although it's important for children to play out of doors during the winter months, they still need to be sun safe. Sun safety is a year-round necessity.

☀ While a darker skin color offers more UV protection than lighter skin, it is still important for all children to practice sun safety.

☀ During overcast or cloudy days, UV rays can still penetrate clouds and snow or ice can reflect UV rays upward. This means if there is prolonged outdoor activity on a winter day, a child can be exposed or sunburned in unprotected areas, such as on the neck, ears, and under the chin.



☀ Continue to apply sunscreen during the winter months, especially if there is snow on the ground. Use a sunscreen and lip balm with SPF 30 or higher. Be sure to cover the ears, and under the chin, and the hands.

☀ Dress kids in a long-sleeved shirt or jacket even on warmer or overcast winter days. Hats and scarfs protect the head and neck.

☀ On winter outings, remind parents to provide sunglasses that block 100% of UV rays, because reflection off snow and ice can double the strength of UV rays. Don't forget wide-brimmed hats in the winter, too, to protect the face and back of the neck.

## What About Vitamin D?

Parents may be concerned that their children won't get enough vitamin D without enough sun exposure. Health Canada recommends that infants under one year get 400 International Units (IU) of vitamin D each day. Children over age one should get 600 IU per day.

Exposure to the sun places children at risk of sun damage and of skin cancer in the future, so use sun protection measures (hat, clothing, sunglasses, and sunscreen) when the UV Index is 3 or higher. Children with darker skin tones need protection just as much as those with lighter skin.

Parents can be reassured that the risks of increased sun exposure outweigh any benefits in increased levels of vitamin D. While parents have overall responsibility for their children's diet, teachers and caregivers can recommend that parents provide Vitamin-D rich meals and snacks, such as fortified milk and canned or fresh salmon or tuna or, if recommended, a Vitamin D supplement.

Dietary sources and supplementation of Vitamin D are of particular importance for children with darker skin.

# Who are we?

The Prevention Programs of the BC Cancer Agency focus on primary cancer prevention, working with health authorities and other stakeholders to inform British Columbians about the main risk factors for cancer and promoting healthy lifestyle choices and practices. Our goal is to prevent cancer. In fact, **over 50 percent of cancers can be prevented** by avoiding the main risk factors of excessive sun exposure, tobacco use, obesity, inactivity, and poor nutrition.

Visit our websites  
[www.bccancer.bc.ca/ppi/prevention](http://www.bccancer.bc.ca/ppi/prevention)  
[www.suntips.ca](http://www.suntips.ca)



## What is the UV Index?

The UV Index, issued daily by Environment Canada, is a simple measure of the intensity of the sun's ultraviolet (UV) radiation.

The index alerts you to the need for sun protection. The higher the index, the more careful you have to be when outdoors.

You can find the link for the UV index above, right. Your local paper and radio station may also let you know when the UV index is expected to reach 3 or higher.

### UV Online

The daily UV index for BC can be found at  
[www.theweathernetwork.com/weather/cancitiesbc\\_en](http://www.theweathernetwork.com/weather/cancitiesbc_en)

#### 2 or less LOW

Wear sunglasses on bright days. In winter, reflection off snow can nearly double UV strength. If you burn easily, cover up and use 30+ SPF sunscreen.

#### 3 - 5 MODERATE

Take precautions, such as covering up, if you will be outside. Stay in shade near midday when the sun is strongest.

#### 6 - 7 HIGH

Apply a sunscreen with a SPF of at least 30. Wear a wide-brim hat, and sunglasses to protect your eyes.

#### 8 - 10 VERY HIGH

Minimize sun exposure during midday hours, from 11 am to 3 pm. Protect yourself by liberally applying a sunscreen with 30+ SPF. Wear protective clothing and sunglasses.

#### 11+ EXTREME

Try to avoid sun exposure from 11 am to 3 pm and be extra vigilant about wearing protective clothing and 30+ SPF sunscreen.

