

Outdoor play: Skin Protection

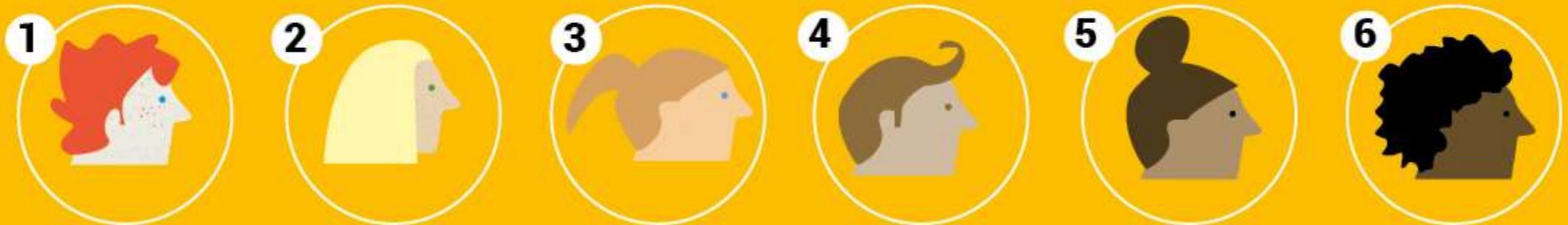
- Ultraviolet radiation (UV) is a component of sunlight. Overexposure can damage skin cells and increase skin cancer risk later in life.
- The UV index is a scale that was developed by the World Health Organisation which measures the UV level at the surface of the Earth.
- When the UV index is 3 or above, you need to protect children's skin.
- **In Ireland, the UV radiation levels are high from April to September, even when it is cloudy. Stay safe by limiting time in the sun when UV is strongest, typically between the hours of 11:00am-3:00pm.**



The effects of UV exposure on skin are not the same for everyone

- A person's natural skin colour influences their sensitivity to UV and skin cancer risk, and can be classified on a scale – the Fitzpatrick skin type classification scale, which ranges from 1 (high risk) to 6 (low risk). It considers skin colour (i.e. pale white to black), and how the skin reacts to sunlight (i.e. whether it burns easily, or tans).
- Most people living in Ireland have fair skin - Fitzpatrick skin type 1 or 2. People with these skin types burn easily and tan poorly so are particularly vulnerable to UV damage, and as a result, are at a higher risk of skin cancer.

THE FITZPATRICK SKIN TYPE CLASSIFICATION



Outdoor play: **Babies and young children are particularly vulnerable to sun exposure**

- Playing and spending time outdoors is such an important part of childhood but it is crucial that children are protected and safe in the sun.
- Children are particularly vulnerable to the damaging effects of overexposure to UV from the sun. Sunburn during childhood increases the risk of skin cancer in later life.
- Clothing and shade are the main methods of sun protection.
- For children up to 1 year old, it is recommended to avoid all direct exposure to sunlight, for example by providing shade when they are outdoors and wearing protective clothing and hats.
- It's better in the first six months to protect babies from sunlight rather than use sunscreen. Some parents may choose to use sunscreen occasionally on small parts of their baby's skin. If so, choose a sunscreen that is suitable for babies such as a sensitive or toddler sunscreen.



Outdoor play: How to protect skin



Be **SunSmart**:

UV radiation levels are high from April to September, even when it is cloudy.

Stay safe by limiting time in the sun when UV is strongest, typically between the hours of 11:00am-3:00pm



Slip on clothing: Cover skin as much as possible, wear long sleeves, collared t-shirts, clothes made from close-woven material that does not allow sunlight through.



Slop on sunscreen. Use factor 30 for adults and 50 for kids. Apply sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 30+ for adults and 50+ for children, with high UVA protection, and water resistant. Reapply regularly. No sunscreen can provide 100% protection, it should be used alongside other protective measures such as clothing and shade.



Slap on a wide brimmed hat: Protect your face, ears and neck.



Seek shade: Especially if outdoors between 11am and 3pm, and always use a sunshade on a child's buggy.



Slide on sunglasses: Guard your eyes from harm by wearing sunglasses with UV protection.



Do not deliberately try to get a suntan. Avoid getting a sunburn. Never use a sunbed.

Outdoor play: How to protect skin



Remember the **SunSmart** 5 'Ss' particularly from April - September, even when it is cloudy.



Slip on clothing



Slop on sunscreen



Slap on a wide brimmed hat



Seek shade



Slide on sunglasses



Outdoor play: Shelter and shade

- If possible, have a covered outdoor area so that children can be active in all weather conditions.
- A covered area provides shade for children so they have fresh air without accumulating damaging effects from overexposure to the sun. If this is not possible, what can you do to provide shade and shelter?



Outdoor play: Create a SunSmart Kit



Find a bag at home to use for your SunSmart kit



Add to the bag



Clothing that covers your skin to **slip** on



A wide brimmed hat to **slap** on



Sunglasses to **slide** on



Sunscreen of at least 50SPF to **slop** on

Keep your Healthy Ireland SunSmart kit near the door so you can grab it before you go out into the sun! And remember, seek shade to play in!

Outdoor play: **Resources**

- Colour in [SunSmart Kids](#)
- Create a [SunSmart Kids Kit](#)
- Factsheet: [Playing Outdoor: Skin protection for children](#)