

The Children's Clinic

Protocols for Use of Sunscreen and Insect Repellants

[Adapted from American Academy of Pediatrics and Centers for Disease Control Recommendations]

Sun Safety and Sunscreens

Babies under 6 months:

- Avoid sun exposure. Shade needs to be away from sun reflection from water or concrete, both of which can cause reflective burns. Dress infants in lightweight long pants and long-sleeved shirts and brimmed hats. However, when adequate clothing and shade are not available, parents can apply a minimal amount of sunscreen to small areas, such as the infant's face and the back of the hands.

For Young Children:

- Apply sunscreen at least 30 minutes before going outside, and use sunscreen even on cloudy days. The SPF should be at least 30.

For Older Children:

- The first, and best, line of defense against the sun is covering up. Wear a hat with a three-inch brim or a bill facing forward, sunglasses (look for sunglasses that block 99-100% of ultraviolet rays), and cotton clothing with a tight weave.
- Stay in the shade whenever possible, and avoid sun exposure during the peak intensity hours - between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.
- Use a sunscreen with an SPF (sun protection factor) of 30 or greater. Be sure to apply enough sunscreen to protect exposed skin areas.
- Reapply sunscreen every two hours, or after swimming or sweating.

Bug Safety and Insect Repellants

[From the AAP Committee on Environmental Health]

Insect repellents containing DEET (N,N-diethyl-m-toluamide, also known as N,N-diethyl-3-methylbenzamide) with a concentration of 10% appear to be as safe as products with a concentration of 30% when used according to the directions on the product labels.

DEET is not recommended for use on children under 2 months of age.

DEET-containing products are the most effective mosquito repellents available. DEET also is effective as a repellent against a variety of other insects, including ticks. It should be used when there is a need to prevent insect-borne disease. The concentration of DEET in products may range from less than 10% to over 30%. **The efficacy of DEET plateaus at a concentration of 30%, the maximum concentration currently recommended for infants and children. The major difference in the efficacy of products relates to their duration of action.** Products with concentrations around 10% are effective for periods of approximately two hours. As the concentration of DEET increases, the duration of activity increases; for example, a concentration of about 24% has been shown to provide an average of 5 hours of protection.

The safety of DEET does not appear to relate to differences in these concentrations. **A prudent approach would be to select the lowest concentration effective for the amount of time spent outdoors. It is generally agreed that DEET should not be applied more than once a day.**

DEET should not be used in a product that combines the repellent with a sunscreen. Sunscreens often are applied repeatedly because they can be washed off. DEET is not water-soluble and will last up to 8 hours. Repeated application may increase the potential toxic effects of DEET.

Other precautions

- Apply DEET sparingly on exposed skin; do not use under clothing.
- Do not use DEET on the hands of young children; avoid applying to areas around the eyes and mouth.
- Do not use DEET over cuts, wounds or irritated skin. Wash treated skin with soap and water after returning indoors; wash treated clothing.
- Avoid spraying in enclosed areas; do not use DEET near food.

DEET should be washed off by showering or bathing with soap and water at the end of the day (or when returning to the inside).