

Sun protective behaviour in children in Ireland

Children's exposure to ultraviolet radiation – a risk profile for future skin cancers in Ireland (2020)⁴ found overall that sunscreen use among children in Ireland was reasonably high. However children, with or without input from their parents, do not appear to be taking precautions in a way that recognises sunscreen as the last line of defence after clothing, shade, hat and sunglasses. Half of children do not wear a hat or long-sleeved clothing in the sun and three quarters reported experiencing sunburn during the previous summer.

Why wide-brimmed hats?

Wide-brimmed hats, including bucket and legionnaire style hats, protect the face, head, back of neck and ears. Baseball or peaked caps and sun visors are not recommended, as these styles do not protect the ears, cheeks or neck^{5 6}. Common sites of skin damage and skin cancer are the neck, ears, lips, face and nose. These areas are constantly exposed to the elements and therefore, generally receive more UV radiation than other parts of the body. Wide-brimmed hats should always be used in combination with other forms of sun protection such as clothing, shade and sunscreen (see Addendum for the 5 S's of skin protection).

⁵ Standards Australia. (2020). Australian Standard AS 4399:2020 Sun protective clothing -Evaluation and classification.

⁶ Schalka, S., Steiner, D., Ravelli, F. N., Steiner, T., Terena, A. C., Marçon, C. R., Ayres, E. L., Addor, F. A., Miot, H. A., Ponzio, H., Duarte, I., Neffá, J., Cunha, J. A., Boza, J. C., Samorano, L.deP., Corrêa, M.deP., Maia, M., Nasser, N., Leite, O. M., Lopes, O. S., ... Brazilian Society of Dermatology (2014). Brazilian consensus on photoprotection. *Anais brasileiros de dermatologia*, 89(6 Suppl 1), 1–74. <https://doi.org/10.1590/abd1806-4841.20143971>



Addendum

The easiest way to protect children's skin from UV is to follow the SunSmart 5 S's especially from April to September:

- **Slip on clothing:** We need to cover our skin as much as we can, using tops that have long sleeves to cover your arms and collars to cover your neck.
- **Slop on sunscreen:** Children need a stronger sunscreen than adults, with a Sun Protection Factor (SPF) of at least 50, while adults should wear a sunscreen with a SPF of at least 30. The sunscreen you use should be water resistant with high UVA protection and be reapplied every couple of hours. No sunscreen can provide 100% protection; it should be used with other measures such as clothing and shade.
- **Slap on a wide – brimmed hat:** This will shade your face, ears and neck from the sun.
- **Seek shade:** Especially if outdoors between 11am and 3pm.
- **Slide on sunglasses** with UV protection: Guard your eyes from harm.

Even when it is cloudy, you should protect your skin as the sun's UV rays can travel through cloud. Also important to remember do not deliberately try to get a suntan. Avoid getting a sunburn. Never use a sunbed.