

Sun protection requirements

In Queensland, the provision of shaded outdoor areas is a licensing requirement under the Child Care Act 2002.

The National Childcare Accreditation Council has incorporated requirements for sun protection within the National Quality Improvement and Accreditation System.

Education Queensland has a specific sun safety policy that states that all schools must develop and implement a sun protection policy.

What can be done to improve sun protection?

The Queensland Cancer Fund is the main contact for sun protection resources in Queensland and can provide you with considerable assistance.

Resources available through the Queensland Cancer Fund include:

SunSmart Centres Program

The SunSmart Centres Program is an award program offered by Queensland Cancer Fund. It recognises the important work being done by licensed centre-based services with regards to sun safety. To become a SunSmart Centre your centre needs to meet set criteria in sun safety. Once your centre is awarded as SunSmart you will receive a large sign for your front fence and a series of resources to keep your policy active.

Policy guidelines

All early childhood centres should have a comprehensive and active SunSmart policy. For assistance with policy development and implementation see Working Towards a SunSmart Queensland – Early Childhood Setting SunSmart Policy Guidelines.

Information on appropriate and effective shade

The provision of good quality shade for young children has been recognised as a key factor in reducing children's exposure to sun damage.

Shade provision

To get information on shade provision see:

- ☀ shade guidelines – Planning Sun-Safe Environments in Queensland: Shade for Young Children.
- ☀ umbrellas (loan only and deposit required).

Small grants schemes

Some funding agencies will provide small grants to purchase shade structures. It is wise to check local papers for information about small grants. Queensland Cancer Fund maintains a list of funding agencies.

Include sun protection in teaching and curriculum

Resources available for the classroom include storybooks; videos; information brochures; posters; stickers and some Sid Seagull costumes (for loan only and deposit required).

Community Speakers Program

The Queensland Cancer Fund's Community Speaker Program can provide speakers to provide information on the prevention and early detection of skin cancer and the SunSmart Early Childhood Centres Program. These presentations will give your staff a greater understanding of sun protection for themselves and the children at your service. Please note the availability of speakers maybe limited in some regions

For access to these and other resources please call the

**Queensland Cancer Fund
Cancer Helpline
on 13 11 20
or visit www.qldcancer.com.au**

This brochure was prepared by the **Skin Prevention Early Childhood Implementation Group (ECIG)** as a strategy from the Queensland Skin Cancer Prevention Strategic Plan 2001-2005 which can be accessed at

www.health.qld.gov/phs/Documents/shpu/12082.pdf

The ECIG is made up of representatives from the Child Care Unit (Department of Families); Education Queensland; Creche and Kindergarten Association; Playgroup Association of Queensland; Early Childhood Teacher's Association; Kath Dickson Centres; The Lady Gowrie Centres; Queensland Cancer Fund; Skin Cancer Research Group James Cook University; Family Day Care Association and Queensland Health.



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Sun protection in Queensland early childhood services



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Introduction

Early childhood services can play an important role in the prevention of skin cancer. This brochure aims to provide current information about sun safety and highlights the need to keep sun safety a priority in all Queensland early childhood settings.

Exposure to the sun's ultraviolet radiation (UVR) in childhood is a major risk factor for all forms of skin cancer. **Reducing children's exposure to UVR is considered to be the single most effective strategy for reducing future rates of skin cancer in Australia.**

Staff and committees of early childhood education and care services have legal and good practice obligations, to ensure effective sun protection for children in their care and to provide accurate and useful information to their parents and carers.

Why is sun protection important?

Queensland has the highest rates of skin cancer in the world. Each year in Queensland, skin cancer claims more than 300 lives. Along with this substantial loss of life, this preventable disease costs \$300 million annually.

Sun damage to skin in the first five years of life is a major cause of skin damage in later life.



Moles

Queensland children have the greatest numbers of moles (melanocytic naevi) which represent the strongest risk factor for melanoma. Malignant melanoma is a major cause of death from cancer among adults under 45 years in Australia with incidence rates increasing substantially in the 1980's.

While these moles do not necessarily lead to skin cancer, they are indicators of skin damage. Increased numbers of moles can be related to a number of factors including sunburn during childhood, a tendency to burn and a lifestyle involving increased sun exposure. Moles also appear to be:

- ☼ concentrated on skin surfaces that are exposed to the sun
- ☼ equally spread between boys and girls
- ☼ twice as likely to appear in children who have had as few as one episode of sunburn when compared to those children who have never been sunburnt.

Recent studies have shown that children who averaged more than four hours in the sun per day were three times as likely to have very high numbers of moles than were children who spent one hour or less in the sun each day.

(Harrison SL, MacLennan R, Speare R, Wronski I. Sun Exposure and melanocytic naevi in young Australian children, Lancet 1994; 344: 1529-32)

The UV (ultraviolet) index

Used properly, the UV index can provide useful information that can help you plan outdoor activities in ways that minimise overexposure to the sun's rays. This UV index is a number that reflects the maximum level of UV radiation from the sun (observed or predicted) at a particular location for any given day. The UV index generally reported by the electronic and print news media in Australia provides a daily forecast of the expected risk of overexposure to the sun using a scale that ranges from 0 to 10+.

Category	UV index values
Moderate	Below 3
High	3 – 6
Very High	7 – 9
Extreme	10+

During summer, the UV Index in some parts of Australia can approach 20. In these conditions, many Australians begin to burn in less than 5 minutes.

Daily UV Index forecasts for most Queensland cities and towns can be found at: <http://www.bom.gov.au/weather/qld/forecasts.shtml>

Vitamin D and sun exposure

Queenslanders receive enough UVR (Ultraviolet Radiation) for Vitamin D through usual daily activities and indirect exposure to the sun. There is no need for intentional exposure to the sun to receive healthy Vitamin D levels in Queensland.

Sun Protection Factor (SPF)

Sun Protection Factor (SPF) is a laboratory measurement that indicates the amount of ultraviolet (UV) protection the product will provide if used properly. Technically the SPF is the ratio of the UV dose that is required to cause reddening of the skin (sunburn).

People's skin reacts differently to chemicals and sunscreen. The level of protection provided by a sunscreen varies and depends on many factors including genetics, existing sun induced skin damage and your skin type. These issues reinforce that sunscreen should not be regarded as the sole form of sun protection.

Personal protection

Avoiding overexposure to the sun is the best way to prevent skin cancer. It is recommended that children (and adults):

- ☼ are dressed in long sleeved, collared tops and longer pants in darker colours for outdoor activities (preferably with an ultraviolet protection factor rating)
- ☼ wear broad brim or legionnaire style hats and sunglasses
- ☼ minimise time spent in the sun between 10am and 3pm (peak UV times)
- ☼ seek shade provided by trees, permanent or temporary shade structures where possible
- ☼ apply SPF 30+ broad spectrum sunscreen, and re-apply at least every 2 hours

Staff displaying good sun protection behaviour is most important. It is beneficial to encourage all staff to act as positive role models of sun protection behaviour by wearing hats that protect the face, neck and ears and using SPF 30+ broad spectrum, water-resistant sunscreen when involved in any outdoor activities.