This SunSmart policy provides guidelines to ensure that children and staff are protected from damaging levels of ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun.

# Sample sun protection policy for early childhood services

## Rationale

Excessive exposure to the sun’s UV radiation can cause sunburn, skin and eye damage and skin cancer. Babies and young children are particularly vulnerable to UV damage.

New Zealand and Australia have the highest skin cancer rates in the world. UV radiation damage accumulated during childhood and adolescence increases the risk of skin cancer later in life.

**Skin cancer is one of the most preventable cancers in New Zealand. More than 95% of skin cancers could be prevented by reducing exposure to UV radiation.**

## Guidance

* Sun protection should be used whenever **UV levels are 3 or higher**. For most parts of New Zealand this is between September and April, especially between 10am and 4pm. UV levels can be high on cool or cloudy days, so temperature is not a good indicator for deciding to use sun protection. To check the UV levels in your area, download the free UVNZ app for iPhone or Android.
* Use sun protection throughout the year when at high altitudes (mountains) or near reflective surfaces such as water and snow.
* Outdoor activities are encouraged year-round (with sun protection when necessary).
* All babies **under 12 months** should be kept out of direct sun when UV levels are 3 or higher. They should be protected by shade, clothing and broad-brimmed hats. Sunscreen may be used on small areas of a baby’s skin but do not rely on sunscreen as the primary method of protection. If you do need to use sunscreen on a baby (at any age), use a sunscreen labelled as being for sensitive skin or suitable for children if possible, patch test first, and only use on very small areas of skin.
* Widespread use of sunscreen on babies **under 6 months** is not recommended, as they have sensitive skin and should be kept in the shade where possible.
* Children with a health condition or taking medicines that make them sensitive to the sun should use sun protection all year round. This includes children with autoimmune diseases, conditions that weaken the immune system, have had an organ transplant, or take medicines that increase sensitivity to light.

## Our sun protection strategy:

All children and staff use a combination of sun protection measures whenever UV Index levels are 3 and above. Particular care is taken between September and April (between 10am and 4pm) when UV levels reach their peak.

This policy is adopted from **(DATE) s**o that children attending **(NAME OF CENTRE)** are protected from harmful UVR from the sun.

This SunSmart policy has been developed to ensure that all children and staff are protected from damaging levels of UV radiation from the sun during all outdoor activities.

### 1. Shade

Management makes sure there are shelters, such as trees and other shade areas providing enough coverage for all children playing outside.

The availability of shade is considered when planning outdoor activities at the centre and outdoor excursions.

Children are encouraged to use available areas of shade when outside.

For the purposes of outdoor congregation, such as ceremonies or gatherings, children and staff are required to utilise shaded areas where appropriate.

Children who do not have appropriate hats or outdoor clothing are required to play in the shade or indoors (see hat exemption point 3).

As part of the service’s planning, the leadership team will consider how to increase shade where it is lacking. When remodelling, planning new buildings or playgrounds and play spaces, providing shade will be considered from the start.

### 2. Clothing

When outside, children wear loose-fitting clothing that covers as much skin as possible. Families are encouraged to dress children in tops with elbow-length sleeves, and if possible, collars and knee length or longer style shorts or skirts.

Some cover up clothing is provided at the centre if required.

Rash tops are encouraged for water play, if possible.

### 3. Hats

Children are required to wear hats that protect their face, neck and ears, legionnaire, broad-brimmed (minimum 7.5 cm brim) or deep crown bucket hat (minimum 6 cm brim). Baseball caps and visors do not offer enough protection and are therefore not recommended.

The service provides spare sunhats for children to use if necessary.

Students and staff may be exempt from wearing a sunhat due to cultural or religious beliefs. In this case, other methods of sun protection, such as seeking shade, and wearing sunscreen and sunglasses, should be emphasised.

### 4. Sunscreen

A water-resistant, broad spectrum sunscreen with an SPF of 30 and above that meets the Australian and NZ standard (AS 2604), is available for staff and children’s use. Use a cream, lotion or gel sunscreen if possible. Aerosol sunscreens are not as effective, as it is difficult to ensure enough sunscreen is applied evenly to the skin.

Children are encouraged to apply their own sunscreen (under supervision).

Sunscreen is applied at least 20 minutes before going outdoors and re-applied every two hours or more frequently if sweating or swimming (in accordance with manufacturer’s instructions). It must not be used to extend time outside.

Routine breaks are provided during outdoor activities for children to reapply sunscreen and get water.

If children are playing in water, sunscreen that is used is water resistant.

Sunscreen is stored in a cool place and expired products are not used.

This policy will form part of any risk assessment for activities/trips outside the centre. Early childhood services may wish to have a sunscreen application chart to facilitate identification of which children need re-application of sunscreen and when. Please note special sunscreen guidance for babies.

### 5. Sunglasses

If parents want their children to also wear sunglasses, these should be close fitting and cover as much of the eye area as possible. Sunglasses should meet the AS/NZ Standard 1067:2016 (this is usually marked on the arm of the sunglasses).

Where practical, sunglasses are recommended.

## Reinforce and role model SunSmart behaviour

Staff protect themselves and act as role models by:

Wearing sun protective hats and clothing, and sunglasses when outside.

Applying broad spectrum sunscreen with an SPF of at least 30 and re-applying every 2 hours.

Using shade whenever possible.

## Sharing SunSmart information and skills

The children learn about the harmful effects of UV radiation and sun protection through learning programmes. The programme may utilise free curriculum resources from the Cancer Society: <https://www.sunsmart.org.nz/sunsmart-schools/sunsmart-schools-resources/sunsmart-schools-curriculum-resources/>

The sun protection policy is reinforced through staff and children’s activities and displays.

Educators are aware of the Cancer Society’s free online professional development SunSmart module: <https://bit.ly/3j7M4lD> and free SunSmart resources [www.cancernz.org.nz/reducing-cancer-risk/what-you-can-do/sunsmart/](http://www.cancernz.org.nz/reducing-cancer-risk/what-you-can-do/sunsmart/)

Staff and families are provided with information on the school policy and sun protection at enrolment and through family newsletters, school apps, notice boards and meetings.

When enrolling their child, families are:

Informed of the early childhood services sun protection policy.

Asked to ensure their child wears sun protective clothing.

Asked to provide a water-resistant, broad spectrum sunscreen with an SPF of at least 30 for their child (if not provided by the centre).

Required to give permission for staff to apply sunscreen on their child.

Encouraged to practice SunSmart behaviours themselves when at the service and in the home environment.

Required to provide an appropriate sunscreen if a child has allergies or sensitivity to sunscreen provided by the centre.

## Monitoring and Review

Management and staff monitor and review the effectiveness of the sun protection policy at least every two to three years and revise the policy when required.

Ensure the policy is available to staff, families, and visitors.

Policy Prepared by:

Name or title

on (Date)

Policy approved by:

Name or title

on (Date)

Policy will be reviewed on (Date)

## Useful links

Cancer Society SunSmart website: [www.sunsmart.org.nz](http://www.sunsmart.org.nz)

General SunSmart information: www.cancernz.org.nz/reducing-cancer-risk/what-you-can-do/sunsmart/

To find out if the UV level is 3 or above download the free UVNZ app for iphone or Android: <https://www.sunsmart.org.nz/resources/uvnz-app/>

Staff and parents can learn all about sun protection by completing the free SunSmart online professional development module: <https://bit.ly/3j7M4lD>

## NZ legislation, requirements and standards

There is no statutory obligation to have a policy to protect children, staff, educators and visitors from the sun, but there are general requirements for organisations and businesses to manage the risk to health and safety from exposure to the sun appropriately:

Children:

Education (Early childhood Services) Regulations 2008 [www.legislation.govt.nz/regulation/public/2008/0204/latest/DLM1412619.html](http://www.legislation.govt.nz/regulation/public/2008/0204/latest/DLM1412619.html)

Ministry of Education: Sun protection in early learning: https://www.education.govt.nz/education-professionals/early-learning/health-and-safety/sun-protection-early-learning

Ministry of Education. Shade at School: https://www.education.govt.nz/education-professionals/schools-year-0-13/property/shade-school

Educators, staff and visitors:

Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 [www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2015/0070/latest/DLM5976660.html](http://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2015/0070/latest/DLM5976660.html)

Worksafe Mahi Haumaru Aotearoa: protect your staff from solar UV radiation [www.worksafe.govt.nz/topic-and-industry/work-related-health/protecting-workers-from-solar-uv-radiation/](http://www.worksafe.govt.nz/topic-and-industry/work-related-health/protecting-workers-from-solar-uv-radiation/)

For further support and information, please contact your local Cancer Society.

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