

POSITION STATEMENT:

Promote sun safety policies and practices for youth in educational, childcare, and recreational settings

(MAY 2019)

Carolyn J. Heckman, PhD, Rutgers Cancer Institute of New Jersey; Mary Riley, MPH, Rutgers Cancer Institute of New Jersey; Elliot Coups, PhD, Rutgers Cancer Institute of New Jersey; Zhaomeng Niu, PhD, Jerod Stapleton, PhD, Rutgers Cancer Institute of New Jersey

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The Society of Behavioral Medicine recommends that youth be allowed and encouraged to engage in sun-safe behaviors in educational, childcare, and recreational settings, including use of sunscreen, wide-brimmed hats, other sun-protective clothing, and shade.
- Legislators and policymakers: Initiate and support policies and funding for sun safety practice, education, and research in educational, childcare, and recreational settings (e.g, the Reducing Cancer and Excessive UV Exposure in Children Act).
- Educational, childcare, and recreational settings and personnel: Adopt policies and practices that educate, allow, and encourage youth to engage in sun-safe behaviors including using sunscreen, wide-brimmed hats and other sun-protective clothing, and seeking shade.
- Health care providers: During routine wellness visits and physicals, educate children and their parents about the risks of excess UV exposure and the importance of sun-safe behaviors.



THE PROBLEM

Melanoma is the deadliest form of skin cancer. It is also the second most common cancer in adolescents and young adults aged 15-29 years¹. The incidence rate of melanoma has been rising in the past four decades¹. Excessive exposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation is the major cause of skin cancer. Limiting UV exposure during youth could help avoid these highly preventable cancers later in life².

Much of the time youth spend playing and learning outside is during peak hours (10 am to 4 pm) of UV radiation strength. Thus, it is important that youth engage in effective sun protection behaviors. Such behaviors include regular use of sunscreen with an SPF (sun protection factor) of at least 30, wearing wide-brimmed hats, other protective clothing, and sunglasses, as well as seeking shade, especially during peak hours of UV radiation intensity². These behaviors prevent sunburns and can help reduce skin cancer risk². Unfortunately, in any given year, over half of youth in the USA get sunburned. Additionally, less than a quarter of youth routinely engage in recommended sun protection behaviors, suggesting that additional attention should be focused on youth sun safety¹.



POLICY GAPS

Due to federal, state, and local regulations, youth and their parents currently experience unnecessary barriers to regular use of sun protection such as sunscreen and hats in educational, childcare, and recreational settings.

- One barrier is that sunscreen is defined as an over the counter (OTC) medicine that is regulated by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)³. This OTC designation (rather than cosmetic as in some countries) makes the use of sunscreen in educational, childcare, and recreational settings difficult. For example, youth may be required to bring a doctor's note granting permission for its use⁴.
- A second barrier is that school dress codes may disallow wide-brimmed hats and other head/face protective clothing⁴.

Such restrictions may lead to youth being exposed to excessive sun or sunburning due to lack of adequate protection.

POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS

In view of growing concern over increased melanoma rates and rising exposure to UV radiation among youth, there is a need for new legislation to promote sun safety among youth in educational, childcare, and recreational settings. The American Society of Dermatologic Surgery Association (ASDSA) launched the SUNucate initiative to address this policy gap.

- SUNucate created a model bill, the Reducing Cancer and Excessive UV Exposure in Children Act (https://asds. net/Portals/0/PDF/asdsa/ model-bill-sunucate.pdf), based on legislation first passed in California, Texas, and Oregon.
- The SUNucate model bill would ensure access to sunscreen and protective clothing in schools and camps without the need for a physician's note. Personnel can be permitted to assist youth in applying sunscreen if necessary. An optional bill feature encourages schools and camps to raise awareness via education about skin cancer prevention and sun safety.
- In addition to the school and camp settings mentioned in the SUNucate model bill, daycares are common settings for young children to be exposed to UV radiation. Along with the sun safety strategies mentioned in the SUNucate model bill, shade (such as that provided by trees, awnings, or shade sails)2 can play an important role in protecting youth in childcare and educational settings (e.g., playgrounds, dining areas, field days/trips, waiting for busses, and summer camps).

ENDORSEMENTS



National Council on

Skin Cancer Prevention



REFERENCES

- Barr RD, Ries LA, Lewis DR, et al. Incidence and incidence trends of the most frequent cancers in adolescent and young adult Americans, including "nonmalignant/noninvasive" tumors. Cancer. 2016;122(7):1000-1008.
- 2 Tripp MK, Watson M, Balk SJ, et al. State of the science on prevention and screening to reduce melanoma incidence and mortality. CA Cancer J Clin. 2016.
- ³ Food and Drug Administration. Labeling and effectiveness testing; sunscreen drug products for over-the-counter human use. Final rule. *Federal register*. 2011;76(117):35620-35665.
- 4 Moore, MT. Many school systems say kids need a doctor's note to use sunscreen. Washington Post. August 7, 2017, Retrieved 2/25/19 from https://www.washingtonpost.com/national/ health-science/many-school-systems-say-kids-need-a-doctorsnote-to-use-sunscreen/.