Sun Safe

A Sun Protection Primary Care Practice Manual

Developed by:
The Dept. of Community & Family Medicine
Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center
and The Norris Cotton Cancer Center
Hanover, NH

Being safe in the sun can still be fun

Sun Protection Primary Care Practice Manual

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Background Information

This manual was developed for health care professionals in conjunction with The SunSafe Project of Dartmouth Medical School, Hanover, NH. The SunSafe Project was a skin cancer prevention study funded by the National Cancer Institute. The project engaged health care professionals, elementary school teachers and administrators, child care providers, recreation department personnel, parents, and children. It effectively promoted sun protection for children ages 2-9 to reduce their risk of later developing of skin cancer.* In addition to this manual, health professionals participating in the SunSafe Project received: a grand rounds on sun protection for children, a practice visit by a SunSafe facilitator, and any necessary follow-up support.

The core message is:

Avoid or limit exposure during the sun's peak hours of 11am and 2pm.

Block the sun's rays by using a sunscreen with a SPF of 15 or higher.

Cover-up with clothing and a hat with a brim.

Guidelines developed by: American Academy of Dermatology

*Project Publications :

Dietrich, AJ, AL Olson, CH Sox, CW Winchell, J Grant-Petersson, DW Collison. Sun protection counseling for children: New Hampshire primary care practice patterns and the impact of an intervention. (under review, Archives of Family Medicine)

Grant-Petersson, J, AJ Dietrich, CH Sox, CW Winchell, & MM Stevens. Promotion of sun protection in elementary schools and child care settings: The SunSafe Project. Journal of School Health (slated for publication March 1999)

AJ Dietrich, AL Olson, CH Sox, MM Stevens, TD Tosteson, T Ahles, CW Winchell, J Grant-Petersson, DW Collison, R Sanson-Fisher. 1998. A community-based randomized trial encouraging sun protection for children. Pediatrics 102(6): URL: http://www.pediatrics.org/cgi/content/full/102/6/e64

Olson, AL, AJ Dietrich, CH Sox, MM Stevens, CW Winchell, TA Ahles. 1997. Solar protection of children at the beach. Pediatrics 99(6): URL: http://www.pediatrics.org/cgi/content/full/99/6/e2

About this manual:

This manual will help you deliver sun protection advice to children and their parents as a regular part of your practice. The SunSafe Approach (page 7) provides the framework to make sun protection counseling natural without taking extra time. We urge promotion of "sun safe" behavior just as you promote immunization and seatbelt use.

Contained in this manual:

- ✔ Why sun protection
  - Current facts about skin cancer
- ✔ What we know about sun protection behaviors of children: New Hampshire as a case study

SunSafe Approach:

- ✔ Approaches to implementing the SunSafe message
- ✔ Common challenges by concerned parents and suggested responses
- ✔ Tools to help deliver the SunSafe message
- ✔ Planning worksheet to record your plan and ordering information for chosen tools

Appendices:

- ✔ US Preventive Services Task Force skin cancer guidelines
- ✔ Sample Patient Letter

The SunSafe Project's overall aim is to promote healthy outdoor behavior that lasts a lifetime.

Why Sun Protection?

It is estimated that 1 in 5 Americans will develop skin cancer in their lifetime.

Skin cancer is increasing in the United States and has reached epidemic proportions. It is the most commonly diagnosed cancer in the world.[1] One in every three cancers is a skin cancer[2] and, according to Skin Cancer Foundation statistics, one in every five Americans will develop skin cancer in their lifetime.

Sun protection should be a concern everywhere, but certain factors make it of special concern in some areas of the United States. People living in high altitude areas, such as Colorado, are at increased risk due to less atmosphere to shield out the sun. States which receive plentiful sunshine, such as Arizona, also have increased skin cancer rates. Even seemingly "safe" states such as New Hampshire have residents at risk, as the thinning of the ozone is worse at higher latitudes and people in cooler states often have "tanning binges" on summer weekends, trying to soak up as much sun as possible while there's sunshine available.

Childhood is the time to establish healthy sun protection habits that reduce the chance of developing skin cancer, including malignant melanoma, and other sun-associated conditions such as photo-aging. Children receive as much as three times the annual sun exposure of adults, and 50%-80% of a person's lifetime exposure of sun occurs during childhood. Numerous researchers agree that excessive sun exposure, particularly during one's childhood and adolescent years, increases one's risk for developing malignant melanoma in adulthood.

[1] Armstrong BK, Kricker A. Skin Cancer. Dermatoepidemiology 13(3): 583-594, 1995.

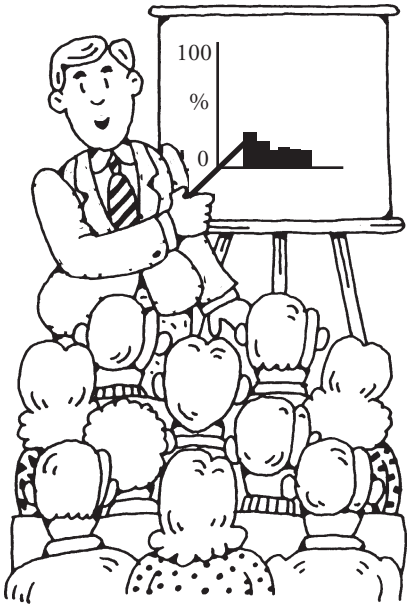
[2] Marks R. An Overview of Skin Cancers. CANCER Supplement 75(2): 607-612, 1995.

What we know about the sun protection behaviors of children: NH as a case study

Before SunSafe

During July and August of 1995, we observed about 1500 New Hampshire children age 2 - 9 years at town beaches during the middle of warm, sunny days. Our observations assessed the use of hats, protective clothing, or shade and we asked children's parents or other caregivers about use of any sunscreen that day. Seventy-nine percent of children had at least some sunscreen.

Only half of the children were fully protected and nearly one in five was totally unprotected by either sunscreen, clothing, hats, or shade!*



*Olson, AL, AJ Dietrich, CH Sox, MM Stevens, CW Winchell, TA Ahles. 1997. Solar protection of children at the beach. Pediatrics 99(6): URL: http://www.pediatrics.org/cgi/content/full/99/6/e2

Impact of the SunSafe *Project*

After SunSafe

After the SunSafe Project was brought to participating towns in NH, children at local beaches were better protected from the sun. In towns that had been exposed to the SunSafe Project for one year, three-quarters of the children were now fully protected and only one in ten was totally unprotected.[1]

At least some of this improvement in sun protection was due to participating primary care practices encouraging sun protection. Significantly more parents in SunSafe towns reported receiving sun protection information from their children's clinician, compared to control towns.[2]

[1] AJ Dietrich, AL Olson, CH Sox, MM Stevens, TD Tosteson, T Ahles, CW Winchell, J Grant-Petersson, DW Collison, R Sanson-Fisher. 1998. A community-based randomized trial encouraging sun protection for children. Pediatrics 102(6): URL: http://www.pediatrics.org/cgi/content/full/102/6/e64

[2] Dietrich, AJ, AL Olson, CH Sox, CW Winchell, J Grant-Petersson, DW Collison. Sun protection counseling for children: New Hampshire primary care practice patterns and the impact of an intervention. (under review, Archives of Family Medicine)