

# An important message for Essex schools from our Public Health and Healthy Schools Team

**Subject: Sun Safety**  
**Date: May 2019**  
**Issue: No. 5**

The Essex Child and Family Wellbeing Service (ECFWS) supports children, families, schools and communities to address current physical and emotional health, social, and financial issues that may affect the healthy development and future outcomes of young people.

Each month, we promote and support specific local, national and international campaigns by providing education, advice and information to other organisations that can improve health and wellbeing for all. Our campaigns can be interactive with real-life practical learning examples, including web links to resources, which can be used in the classroom or at home.

This month, we are focusing our campaign on **Sun Safety**. Skin Cancer awareness month is an annual awareness campaign that takes place every May. The campaign aims to raise awareness of the dangers of unprotected sun exposure and educate the public about the ways to help prevent skin cancer.

UV exposure from the sun is one of the main causes of skin cancer and also one of the most preventable. This campaign hopes to reduce instances of skin cancer and increase the likelihood of early detection through education.

## Your pupils' wellbeing – Primary

Sun Awareness Week takes place during skin cancer awareness month. The aim of this week is to raise awareness of the dangers of long exposure to the sun, and to promote safety when outside.

How can you encourage your pupils to be safe in the sun?

- Apply sun screen
- Put on a hat
- Cover skin
- Spend time in the shade when the sun is strong

**Did you know** - A hat with a wide brim gives the best protection as they protect the back of your neck and ears. Encourage children to swap their baseball caps for a hat with a wide brim.

## Your pupils' wellbeing – Secondary

Do your pupils know that sunbeds are no safer than exposure to the sun itself? Using a sunbed before they go on holiday doesn't protect them against further damage from the sun while they're away. Pupils can find out more about sun safety with the Teenage Cancer Trust's [myth busting video](#) and additional resources.

During Sun Awareness Week encourage pupils to choose good quality, wraparound sunglasses that stop the sun from getting in at the sides. When choosing sunglasses, look out for

- The CE or British Standard mark (BS EN 1836: 2005)
- A UV 400 label
- A label saying the glasses give 100% UV protection

Click [here](#) for further ways to help them enjoy the sun safely.

## Wellbeing for you

How much sun screen should we apply?

For an average sized adult, you'll need about 2 teaspoons for your head, neck and arms, or 2 tablespoons if you're wearing a swimsuit.

We all need some sunshine to make enough vitamin D to build and maintain strong bones. The amount needed depends on different factors. It's not possible to give a one size fits all recommendation. Enjoying the sun safely while taking care not to burn should help most people get a good balance. Once you've healthy levels of Vitamin D, the body just gets rid of any extra.

Remember to regularly check your skin. If you notice skin changes over a few weeks or months, you should get your GP to check them.

For further information on skin cancer click [here](#).

## Family Wellbeing

*Please disseminate through Parent Mail where possible*

Babies and young children can become very ill in hot weather. Their health can be seriously affected by:

- Dehydration
- Heat exhaustion and heatstroke
- Sunburn

Some key ways to keep your family safe and healthy in warm, sunny weather are:

Make sure that everybody in your family drinks lots of fluids to avoid becoming hydrated. You can be creative when trying to do this – perhaps try making homemade lollies made from very diluted fruit juice, or offer food with high water content such as watermelons for snacks!

Keep rooms cool by closing blinds or curtains during the day. A fan can be helpful in circulating the air around a room.

Playing in a paddling pool is a great way of keeping children cool – but make sure you watch toddlers when they're in a paddling pool or playing near water. Drowning is one of the commonest causes of child death – babies can drown in as little as two centimetres of water. If your children are playing outside near exposed water such as fish ponds, ensure they are supervised at all times. If you have a garden pond, fence it off, fill it in or securely cover it.

Think carefully about how you dress your children in hot weather, ensure they are in cool, light clothing that protects their skin from the sun. Keep nightwear and bedclothes to a minimum.

Choose a sunscreen with good protection against UVA and UVB. This is because both UVA and UVB rays cause skin cancer. The SPF shows how much protection the sunscreen gives against UVB radiation – as long as you put enough on!

When using sunscreen you should:

- Check the use by date - most sunscreens have a shelf life of 2 to 3 years, and last about 12 to 18 months after opening
- Put your sunscreen on before you go out in the sun so it can be absorbed into your skin
- Apply another layer to make sure you haven't missed any parts of the body
- Reapply regularly

For further information on sunscreen and sun safety click [here](#) and for information on how to apply sunscreen to children click [here](#).

# References

Please use these references to further your reading and find out more information on sun safety

1. NHS. (2019). Sun safety for children. Available at: [www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/safety-in-the-sun/](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/pregnancy-and-baby/safety-in-the-sun/)
2. NHS. (2019). Sunscreen and sun safety. Available at: [www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/sunscreen-and-sun-safety/](http://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-body/sunscreen-and-sun-safety/)
3. Teenage Cancer Trust. (2019). Shunburn: Stay Safe in the Sun. Available at: [www.teenagecancertrust.org/support-us/spread-word/shunburn-stay-safe-sun](http://www.teenagecancertrust.org/support-us/spread-word/shunburn-stay-safe-sun)
4. Cancer Research UK. (2017). Ways to enjoy the sun safely. Available at: [www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/causes-of-cancer/sun-uv-and-cancer/ways-to-enjoy-the-sun-safely](http://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/causes-of-cancer/sun-uv-and-cancer/ways-to-enjoy-the-sun-safely)
5. Cancer Research UK. (2017). Skin Cancer. Available at: [www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/skin-cancer](http://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/skin-cancer)
6. NHS. (2019). How can I keep my baby safe during hot weather? Available at: [www.nhs.uk/common-health-questions/childrens-health/how-can-i-keep-my-baby-safe-during-hot-weather/](http://www.nhs.uk/common-health-questions/childrens-health/how-can-i-keep-my-baby-safe-during-hot-weather/)

To find out more information about us and the wide range of services we offer, please visit [www.essexfamilywellbeing.co.uk](http://www.essexfamilywellbeing.co.uk)

We are always looking for ways to improve and provide you with information that is beneficial and relevant to you. We value your opinion and would love to hear your feedback on our briefings. Please send your reply to [Essex.Communications@virginicare.co.uk](mailto:Essex.Communications@virginicare.co.uk)

