



## SUN SMART POLICY

### Aims:

#### To:

- create healthy environments and encourage appropriate behaviours to allow some UV exposure for vitamin D and minimise overexposure to reduce skin and eye damage and skin cancer risk.
- encourage behaviour change through education and role-modelling.
- protect staff and students from harm caused by overexposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation.

Note: Overexposure to UV during childhood and adolescence is a major factor in determining future skin cancer risk. Melanoma is the most common cancer in young Australians aged 13-24 years.

### Implementation

#### Schools should:

- Support staff and students to use a combination of sun protection measures when UV index levels are 3 or higher and allow sun exposure when UV levels are below 3.
- Develop and implement policy and procedures promoting sun-safe practices in consultation with students, staff and parents.
- Review and, if necessary update, the policy at least every three years. Schools can access the Sun Smart UV Alert to assist with the implementation of this policy, see: **Ultraviolet UV Radiation**

### Ultraviolet (UV) radiation

#### UV radiation:

- Cannot be seen or felt.
- Comes directly from the sun and can also be scattered in the air and reflected by surfaces such as buildings, concrete, snow and sand.
- Can pass through light clouds.
- Is measured by a UV index that:
  - Indicates the amount of UV radiation that reaches the earth's surface.
  - Categorises the level of risk from low (index of 1-2) to extreme (index of 11+)
  - Varies in intensity across the year.
  - Is normally highest during school hours.

Schools should consider:

- Accessing the Sun Smart *UV Alert* app, adding the Sun Smart website as a favourite or adding a free widget to the school website.
- Enlisting students to help monitor UV alerts and report daily sun protection times each day.

## **SunSmart UV Alert - Sun Protection Times**

SunSmart's *UV Alert* is a tool that can be used to know when to protect against UV radiation and when sun protection is not needed:

Schools should consider:

- Accessing the Sun Smart *UV Alert* app, adding the Sun Smart website as a favourite or adding a free widget to the school website.
- Enlisting students to help monitor UV alerts and report daily sun protection times each day.

**See:**

- [SunSmart - homepage](#)
- [SunSmart - SunSmart app](#)
- [SunSmart - UV Alert Widget](#)

## **Healthy levels of exposure**

**Too much exposure** to UV radiation can cause:

- Skin damage (this is not always immediately evident)
- Sunburn
- Skin cancer
- Short term eye complaints such as:
  - Mild irritation
  - Excessive blinking
  - Swelling
- More serious eye damage over long periods of time such as:
  - Cataracts
  - Cancer of the conjunctiva
  - Pterygium (benign growth of the conjunctiva)

**Too little exposure** to UV radiation can lead to low vitamin D levels.

**Vitamin D:**

- Regulates calcium levels in the blood
- Is vital for healthy bones, muscles, teeth and general health
- Healthy levels need to be maintained throughout the year

## **From May to August**

The average UV levels in Victoria are below 3 and:

- Vitamin D levels need to be maintained
- Sun protection is not normally needed except:
  - Near highly reflective surfaces such as snow
  - If outdoors for extended periods

- When the UV levels reach 3 and above

During these months most people need two to three hours of midday winter sun exposure across the week to help with vitamin D levels. People with naturally very dark brown or black skin may need 3-6 times this exposure.

## **From September to April**

The average UV levels in Victoria are above 3. Most people require just a few minutes of mid-morning or mid-afternoon sun exposure on most days of the week to help with vitamin D levels. People with naturally very dark brown or black skin may need three to six times this exposure.

During these months staff and students should:

- participate in Sun Smart or UV programs, see [Sun Smart or UV programs](#)
- use a combinations of sun protection measures, see: [sun protection measures](#)

Note: The World Health Organisation reports that students with naturally very dark brown or black skin (skin that rarely or never burns) may not be required to wear sunscreen as the melanin in their skin can often tolerate higher levels of UV radiation without burning. This is a decision for families to make. Hats remain necessary to protect the student's eyes from UV damage.

For more Vitamin D information, see:

- [Better Health: Vitamin D](#)
- Department of Health - [Low Vitamin D in Victoria](#)
- [Sun Smart: Vitamin D](#)

## **Sun Smart programs**

School council and staff should:

- develop and implement a UV communication strategy for the whole school community that includes:
  - newsletters
  - the school's homepage
  - staff meetings, parent meetings, school assemblies
  - curriculum activities and school events
  - information at enrolment.

Schools should consider becoming a Sun Smart school. The Sun Smart membership program aims to encourage a healthy UV exposure balance to help with vitamin D and minimise skin and eye damage and skin cancer risk.

Categories

- [Sun Smart Schools Program](#): for E-6, P-6 and specialist schools
- [Secondary School UV Program](#): for E-12, P-12 and 7-12 schools.

The goals of these programs are to:

- ensure students and staff maintain a healthy balance of UV exposure from the sun
- work towards a safe school environment that provides shade for students, staff and the school community when required
- assist students to be responsible for their own sun protection
- ensure that families and new staff are informed of the programs
- encourage the entire school community to use a combination of sun protection measures when UV index levels reach 3 or above

- encourage safe UV exposure whenever UV Index levels are below 3.

For further information about these programs and a sample policy see: [Sun Smart's Early Childhood and Primary Schools](#).

## **Sun protection measures**

For health and safety, when the UV Index is 3 or above schools should respond to each of the following UV protection measures.

### **Shade**

The school council should ensure there is sufficient shelters and trees to adequately shade the school grounds, particularly in the following spaces:

- where students congregate for lunch
- the canteen
- outdoor lesson areas
- popular play areas
- assembly areas
- sporting grounds/pools.

The school council and principal should also:

- ensure there is the provision for shade in planning for future buildings or grounds
- consider the availability of shade when planning excursions and outdoor activities
- complete a periodic shade audit to determine the availability and quality of shade

See:

- Section 8.5.5 Shade Areas in [Building Quality Standards Handbook](#)
- Sun Smart's:
  - [Shade Audit](#)
  - [Seek](#)

### **Clothing**

School uniforms or dress codes should include sun-protective clothing such as:

- loose, cool, closely-woven cotton fabrics
- shirts with a collar and or higher necklines tops with elbow length long sleeves
- longer style shorts and skirts
- rash vests or t-shirts for outdoor swimming activities.

Note: Singlet tops offer little protection and are not recommended.

See:

- [Sun Smart's Slip](#)
- Student Dress Code Health and Safety Considerations within [Related policies](#)

### **Hats**

Students and staff should be encouraged to:

- wear hat styles which protect the face, neck and ears, including:
  - broad brimmed
  - legionnaire
  - bucket.

Note: Baseball caps and visors offer little protection and are not recommended, see: [Sun Smart's Slap](#)

### **Sunglasses**

If practical, schools should encourage students and staff to wear close-fitting, wrap-around sunglasses that:

- meet the Australian Standard 1067 (Sunglasses: Category 2, 3 or 4)
- cover as much of the eye area as possible, see: [Sun Smart's Slide](#)

## Sunscreen

Schools should encourage and remind students and staff to:

- apply SPF 30 or higher broad spectrum, water-resistant, fragrance-free sunscreen generously and evenly to clean, dry skin ideally 20 minutes before going outdoors
- not rely on sunscreen alone as it does not provide full protection
- re-apply sunscreen every two hours or more often when sweating
- check and follow the 'use by' date stated on the packaging
- store sunscreen below 30°C
- with parental consent, children with naturally very dark brown or black skin are not required to wear sunscreen, see: [Healthy levels of exposure](#)
- add sunscreen to the school booklist, as an optional extra, so a student then has their own sunscreen suitable for their skin
- develop strategies that remind students to apply sunscreen before going outdoors (e.g. reminder notices, sunscreen monitors, sunscreen buddies).

Students should:

- be able to apply their own sunscreen
- be reminded to reapply sunscreen
- have access to sunscreen for all outdoor activities e.g. include in first aid kit.

Sunscreen (allergies and cross infection) - the risk of allergies and cross infection from sunscreen use is very small. For information about allergies, cross infection, nanoparticles, regulations and the latest research about sunscreen, see [Sun Smart's Slop](#)

## Role-modelling

As part of OH&S risk control and role-modelling:

- when the UV Index is 3 and above, staff are encouraged to:
  - wear sun-protective hats, clothing and sunglasses for all outdoor activities and duties
  - apply SPF 30 or higher broad-spectrum, water-resistant sunscreen
  - seek shade whenever possible.

When the UV Index is 3 and above, families and visitors participating in and attending outdoor school activities should also be encouraged to use a combination of sun-protection measures.

## Curriculum

Schools should ensure that education about skin cancer prevention and healthy UV exposure levels are included in the curriculum for all year levels, where appropriate. Sun Smart have a number of free resources for schools, see: [Sun Smart](#)

## Occupational Health and Safety

UV radiation, as a carcinogen, is a known workplace hazard for any staff working any part of their day outdoors. OH&S risk controls should consider the school environment including:

- developing shade
- modifying highly reflective surfaces
- higher risk times in Victoria between September and April (inclusive)
- outdoor programming schedules

- dress codes.

See:

- [WorkSafe Victoria](#): for *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2004* Sections 21 and 23: Main Duties of Employers Section 25: Duties of Employees WorkSafe Victoria > Laws and Regulations > Acts and Regulations
- Safe Work Australia: [Guidance Note for the Protection of Workers from the Ultraviolet Radiation in Sunlight](#)

### **Related policies**

- [Student Dress Code - Health and Safety Considerations](#)
- [Related legislation](#)
- [Department resources](#):
  - [Student Health and Safety](#)

**Ratified by School Council: 19<sup>th</sup> February, 2019**  
**Due for Review: 2022**