

Pediatric Pointers

by Dr. Joey Bell, Pembroke Pediatrics

Sun Protection

It seems as if we are blessed with almost year round sunshine here in North Carolina, and it is important that we remember while the sun warms us and brings us life, it can also do damage to our skin if we get too much of it at one time. We should all protect ourselves from the sun's harmful rays throughout the year, and not just in the summer. While the sun's rays are strongest in May through September, they can be harmful any time. Too much exposure to the sun can lead to sunburn, aging, eye damage and skin cancer.

Not many of us know that half of all new cancers in the United States are skin cancers, and that the most deadly type of skin cancer kills over 7,000 people a year. Skin cancer is almost always due to damage from the harmful rays of the sun, and children are more at risk for getting too much sun because they spend more time outdoors than most adults. We know they're always wanting to play outside, and we need to make sure it is safe for them to do so. Children need protection from the sun's harmful rays in the form of sun screen, protective clothing, and sunglasses.

The most well known way to protect your children from the sun is to use sun screen. There are many good brands on the market made especially for children, although it is fine to use a regular sun screen on kids. Sunscreens come with a rating called a SPF (sun protection factor) which is listed on the front of the bottle and which tells how much protection the lotion will offer. The higher the SPF number, the greater the protection. It is recommended that all children use sun screen that is at least SPF 15.

As a parent, you can help your children to be safe in the sun by doing the following things: using a

sun screen with an SPF of 15, applying sun screen 30-45 minutes before children go outside, using a lot of sun screen and spreading it on thick, and by reapplying the sun screen after kids go in the water or sweat a lot. Kids should also wear long sleeve shirts and pants whenever possible, and dark colors allow for less absorption of harmful sunrays than do light colors. Also, any child over one year of age should be wearing sunglasses. Special children's sunglasses can be found in optical shops, and you need to make sure that any sunglasses you buy say "screens out 99-100% of UVA and UVB" so that almost all of the harmful rays are unable to reach your child's eyes.

Remember that even on cloudy days, about 80% of the sun's harmful rays still get through the clouds, so kids need sun screen then too. And when you are outside near water, sand, or concrete (like at the beach or the pool) you need to apply sun screen more often because light is reflected from these surfaces back onto your skin. And while a beach umbrella is great for creating a little shade on a hot day, it only protects us from about half of the sun's harmful rays. Another thing to remember if you have teenagers at home is that tanning beds are especially dangerous to our skin and should be used with caution.

While Native Americans rarely sunburn, it is still possible to do damage to the skin and it is important, especially for lighter-skin individuals, to always follow these sun protection hints. It might seem like a lot of hassle now, but it will be well worth it when your kids grow up without the skin damage that the sun can do. And as always, the best way to get your kids to protect themselves from the sun is to set a good example by following these same suggestions yourself everyday.

HEALTH ALERT!

The Agony Of Ecstasy

(NAPS)—A substance popular among the "rave" culture is not receiving rave reviews from health experts.

The drug known as ecstasy has seen an increase in popularity in recent years, partly due to its reputation as a "safe drug." However, experts warn that such a reputation is unwarranted—and that many users and potential users are unaware of the dangers associated with ecstasy use.



Being the life of the party shouldn't mean risking your life with drugs.

According to the American Psychiatric Association (APA), people take ecstasy because of its reputation of producing a feeling of expansive well-being in the user. It also creates a "high" that stops the user from feeling tired and gives the ability to "rave all night." There are physical changes in the body that produce these effects and also account for the adverse—and often dangerous—side effects.

These side effects may include: "crashing," a feeling of severe depression and overwhelming fatigue; increased body temperature; dehydration; strained muscles; and possible heart, liver or kidney failure. The drug can also cause toxic reactions in people with asthma, heart conditions, diabetes, epilepsy, psychosis and depression.

For more information, visit the APA Web site at www.psych.org.

Special Notice !!!

The North Carolina Indian Housing Authority Board of Commissioners Annual Meeting will be held on Monday, July 23, 2001, at 6:00 P.M. at the NCIHA Administrative Building located at 2125 Sapona Road in Fayetteville, North Carolina. The public is cordially invited to attend!

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