

Sun Safety During Sport

Fact Sheet

Sport is a big part of Australian culture, so it's important for players, coaches, parents, and spectators to take steps to protect themselves from the harsh Australian sun. Without proper sun protection, athletes, coaches, and parents increase their chances of sunburn and skin cancer.

Children's skin is particularly vulnerable to UV radiation⁶. While regular participation in sports offers many benefits, children who participate in outdoor sports have an increased risk of future skin cancer due to high UV exposure levels⁶.

Understanding UV radiation

The sun emits different types of radiation, including visible light or sunlight that we see, infrared radiation (heat) that we feel, and ultraviolet (UV) radiation that can't be seen or felt, but can cause damage to the skin and eyes¹.

The UV index is a helpful tool for identifying when sun protection is needed. The scale ranges from 0 (low) to 11+ (extreme)¹. Sun protection is recommended whenever the UV Index is 3 or above¹. Importantly, UV radiation can be harmful even on cloudy days, not just when the sun is shining³.

Slip, Slop, Slap, Seek, Slide

Sporting participants, officials and spectators should be encouraged to follow these simple steps to minimise their exposure to harmful UV radiation from the sun. Some actions may not be possible during competitions, but children should be encouraged to use as many as possible during training, marshalling and spectating.

- Slip on sun-protective clothing, such as rashies for water events, longer-style uniforms and shirts with collars.
- Slop on SPF50+ sunscreen.
- Slap on a broad-brimmed hat, bucket or legionnaire hat.
- Seek shade.
- Slide on sunglasses.

UV Index 1	UV Index 2	UV Index 3	UV Index 4	UV Index 5	UV Index 6	UV Index 7	UV Index 8	UV Index 9	UV Index 10	UV Index 11
Low		Moderate			High		Very High			Extreme
You can safely stay outside!		Seek shade during the midday hours! Slip on a shirt, slop on sunscreen and slap on a hat!				Avoid being outside during midday hours! Make sure you seek shade! Shirt, Sunscreen and a hat are a must!				

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Eye protection from the sun

Sunglasses should be worn outside to prevent damage to your eyes⁴. Over time, exposure to UV rays can cause serious damage to the eye that can include cataracts and cancer of the eye⁵. In Australia, there is a mandatory safety standard that sunglasses must meet (AS/NZS 1067.1:2016 Eye and face protection – sunglasses and fashion spectacles)⁴.

Sun protection policy tips

Sports and recreational clubs have a duty of care and legal responsibility to provide a safe environment for all participants². This includes protecting people from the sun's UV radiation and making sure people are aware of the need to protect their skin whenever possible. There are several ways sporting clubs can ensure their members and community can safely enjoy outdoor sports while staying protected from the sun.

1.0 Adopt a sun protection policy

Sun protection policies need to be sport-specific and should be considered with key stakeholders⁶.

policies should provide adequate sun protection whilst supporting the athlete's sporting performance⁶.

Athletes, officials, coaches, and spectators often spend prolonged periods outdoors during the sports season. A good sun protection policy should include ways the club will:

- Provide or encourage the wearing of protective clothing
- Promote or ideally supply SPF50+ sunscreen
- Promote sun protection behaviours
- Provide shade at training and events
- Plan training and competitions outside of peak UV times when possible

2.0 Know when to use sun protection

Sun protection is recommended when the UV Index 3 or above, or when outside for extended periods. That may include winter seasons and on cooler days!

To find out what the current UV rating is, download the free Global SunSmart app available on iOS and Android.

3.0 Share the SunSmart message

Include the SunSmart tips in club communications to members and families. This could include messages/reminders to apply sunscreen before events or to remember to wear protective clothing.

4.0 Be a role model

Encourage senior players, coaches and officials to lead by example in adopting SunSmart habits. Setting a positive example is key to guiding younger participants on the importance of protecting themselves from the sun's UV rays.



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Developed in partnership with:



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