



How Can I Keep My Infant Safe in the Summer Sun?

By Ashley Hineman, M.D.

Infants are especially prone to sunburn. It is very important to practice sun avoidance instead of focusing on sunscreens. Infants less than six months old have a higher risk of developing skin cancer if they develop sunburns. Even brief exposure to high temperatures can place young babies at an increased risk of developing dehydration and heat stroke.

If you must venture outdoors in the sun with your baby dress them in lightweight and light colored clothing with UV Protection of at least 30 in the fabric, have them wear large hats that help shield their eyes and neck, and use infant sunglasses which will help protect their sensitive eyes. If your baby is over six months of age use a pediatrician recommended sunscreen with an SPF of at least 35.

If you decide to take your baby in the pool, saltwater pools are less irritating to their skin than chlorine pools. After swimming it is important to immediately rinse your baby off in fresh water so the chemical water doesn't sit and dry on their skin.

And most importantly, always watch your children around any type of water!

What is the best way to keep my child hydrated in the summer heat?

Children love to play outside. Kids are so busy having fun they forget to stop and drink fluids or take a break from the sun. Children have a harder time controlling their body temperature compared with adults. Try to schedule physical activities for the coolest part of the day. Have your child wear lightweight, light colored UV Protective clothing. Encourage them to drink water before going outside.

During their activity/sun exposure continue to have them take frequent breaks to drink fluid. Despite what you may think, water is the best fluid for your child when they are playing outside in the hot weather. Many people think sports drinks or other electrolyte drinks are better but your child does not need to replace electrolytes unless they are exerting themselves for several hours at a time. Juices and sodas are last resorts. If you do use sports drinks, water it down 50% (one part water to one part sports drink).

Symptoms of dehydration include thirst, dry mouth or skin, decreased urination, fatigue, light-headedness and dizziness. They may also have an increased heart

rate and/or breathing rate. It is important to drink 8 ounces of water for every 30 minutes of activity/sun exposure. It is best to keep hydrated, once your child is thirsty they are already behind in their fluid intake. They should take frequent breaks out of the sun and rest from activity.

Call your doctor if you have other questions regarding sun exposure and dehydration. **Additional Resources:** www.aap.org or www.healthychildren.org.

This article is for educational purposes only and should not be considered to be medical advice. It is not a substitution for a visit with your doctor. All medical information is incomplete without a physical exam, which isn't possible without a visit to your doctor. See your pediatrician and have your child evaluated to determine whether your child has a sun-related issue and what treatment options may be available.

Ashley Hineman, M.D. is a Pediatrician at Valley of the Sun Pediatrics. Her office is located at 10204 W. Happy Valley Parkway, Suite 160 in Peoria. She can be reached at 623-362-1818 or visit her website at www.valleyofthesunpediatrics.com.