

Keep your child's skin healthy this summer

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Ah summer days....my favorite as a kid. Long days playing outside, trips to the beach and lake, afternoons at the pool, picnics...what's not to love! While enjoying the outdoors, however, keep in mind that the skin is at higher risk for irritation and damage. Here are some tips to keep your child's skin healthy and protected so none of this fun is missed!

SUN:

The single best thing you can do for your child's skin is protect it from excessive sun exposure. A daily sun block of at least SPF 15 is recommended and a minimum SPF of 30 for outdoor activities. Not all sun blocks are created equal. Those containing zinc or titanium offer the best protection from UVB and UVA rays. Look for a concentration of at least 5% zinc or 2% titanium. For children under the age of 2, it is recommended to use a chemical free sun block. These are blocks that have only zinc or titanium dioxide or a combination of both as active ingredients. Blue Lizard Baby, Vanicream SPF 30 and Elta Pure are great examples.

In addition to sunscreens, use of sun protective shirts, hats, tents and umbrellas, and staying inside during peak sun hours are the best ways to avoid excessive sun exposure.

BUGS:

Insect repellent containing DEET or Picardin are safe for children above the age of 2 months. Avoid excessive application – follow labeling carefully – and choose concentrations below 30%. This means steering clear of repellent/sunscreen combinations because sunscreen needs to be reapplied frequently. Beware of natural products. Natural or organic labeled products often contain ingredients – natural plant oils and extracts – that are frequently irritating to the skin and are common causes of contact allergy (rash). Calamine lotion and oral Benadryl can ease the itch of bug bites. Beware of use of Benadryl containing creams/sprays over a large area or frequent applications as toxicity has been reported with excessive use.

RASH:

Of course the most common rash of summer is poison ivy, but other grasses and plants can cause rash as well. Minor cases can be treated with antihistamine and Calamine lotion. Heat rash is more common in infants and very young children and looks like tiny red bumps or blisters typically over the chest and trunk (areas that get hot).

Usually no treatment is needed but a cool bath and gentle skin care. Typical beach activities in the sun, sand, wind and saltwater can cause eczema to flare and can irritate even normal skin not prone to rashes. Gentle cleansing and use of a barrier repair moisturizer like CeraVe can prevent "beach rash".

CUTS AND SCRAPES:

We can't consider it summer without a bit of scrapes and bumps. Thoroughly cleanse any wound with soap and water and apply an antibiotic ointment. Use the ointment for 2-3 days twice a day and keep the wound moist and protected with bandage and petrolatum (Vaseline or Aquaphor) applications in between cleaning and antibiotic applications. After 2-3 days use only plain petrolatum and stop using antibiotic ointment – this is important as allergy can develop with extended use. Medical treatment is not needed for most scrapes but you should seek medical attention for large wounds or wounds that become painful or pussy after 2-3 days.

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