



Sun Safety School Policies and Education to Prevent Skin Cancer

WHEREAS, schools have the potential to influence student's behavior particularly with regard to outdoor activities both during and after school hours;^{1,2,3}

WHEREAS, it is estimated that most children and adolescents spend 2.5 to 3.0 hours per day outdoors in the sun; ¹

WHEREAS, exposure to the sun's ultraviolet rays during childhood accounts for a significant percentage of a person's lifetime exposure; ^{1,3}

WHEREAS, the lifetime risk of getting skin cancer is linked to sun exposure and sunburn during childhood and adolescence; ^{1,3,4}

WHEREAS, UV radiation has been classified by the U.S. Federal Government as a human carcinogen; ^{1,4,5}

WHEREAS, over exposure to the ultraviolet rays of the sun accounts for the majority of all skin cancers in the U.S.; ^{1,3,4}

WHEREAS, skin cancer is the most common cancer in the U.S.; ^{1,2,3,4}

WHEREAS, schools, along with families and communities, share the responsibility to promote sun safety ; ^{1,2,3}

WHEREAS, one of The Healthy People 2010 objectives is to increase the proportion of persons, particularly adolescents, to use at least one of the protective measures that may reduce the risk of skin cancer; ¹ and

WHEREAS, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the World Health Organization, and the National Association of School Boards of Education have published guidelines for sun safety and skin cancer prevention for schools.¹

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED: that the American School Health Association:

1) urges that school districts establish, monitor, and enforce an official school policy for students and staff on sun safety that promotes sun-safe behaviors for all outside school activities including, but not limited to the wearing of a sun-protective hat, the wearing of clothing which protects the body including the arms and legs, wearing a broad-spectrum sunscreen and lip balm with a sun protective factor (SPF) of 15 or greater, and the use of sunglasses which block UV rays;

2) recommends classroom instruction on sun safety and skin cancer prevention within a comprehensive school health education program through a multi-year scope and sequence of lessons beginning in elementary grades;

3) recommends professional development for teachers and other personnel charged with delivering sun safety and skin cancer prevention education;

4) urges schools to educate students about the dangers of suntanning and the use of tanning salons and sun lamps through the school curriculum;

5) encourages school districts to adopt, implement, and monitor an environmental support plan which addresses sun safety in outdoor areas by providing shade options for students and staff;

6) supports the awareness of the local UV Index (UVI) forecast in daily school communications to students and staff encouraging appropriate safety reminders;

7) supports the scheduling of outdoor activities to maximize the use of indoor or shaded areas particularly when the UV Index is 6 or higher;

8) recommends that school districts provide staff development or in- service training on sun safety and skin cancer prevention information for all school personnel (teachers, coaches, nurses, playground aides) emphasizing the environmental hazard of ultraviolet radiation, the health risk for the potential development of skin cancer, and sun protection strategies;

9) encourages schools to communicate to parents, caregivers, and parent organizations the need for skin cancer prevention measures, sun safety tips, and details of the schools' sun safety program and policies;

10) recommends that the school nurse and all school health services personnel be involved in the sun safety efforts of the school district;

11) encourages all staff to practice sun-protective behaviors and to recognize their importance as sun safety role models for persons of all ages particularly school-aged children and adolescents;

12) recommends that school district administrators and school board members, on a regular basis, evaluate the effectiveness of their sun safety program and seek to remedy any identified weaknesses or deficiencies; and

13) recommends when planning or renovating school facilities, school districts consider providing indoor physical activity facilities, such as gymnasiums and fitness centers, especially in areas of the country that have consistent sunny and hot weather.

References

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Guidelines for School Programs to Prevent Skin Cancer." Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report 51, N0. RR-4 (April 26,2002).
2. AMC Cancer Research Center, "Sun-Safe School Guide." Denver, CO. 1998.
3. National Association of State School Boards of Education, "Fit, Healthy, and Ready to Learn". Part II Sun Safety. Policies to Promote Sun Safety and Prevent Skin Cancer. 2002.
4. American Cancer Society, Cancer Facts and Figures. Atlanta, GA. 2004.
5. Saraiya M, Hall HI, Uhler RJ. Sunburn Prevalence among adults in the UnitedStates, 1999, American Journal of Preventive Medicine. 2002;23 (2):91-97.

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