



All They Really Need: Trusting the Wisdom of Nature to Raise Resilient Kids

SUNSCREEN AND BUG DOPE

Sunscreen

Most sunscreens use chemical ingredients that are absorbed into the skin to absorb UV rays. Some of these chemicals may be problematic. Three per cent avobenzone appears to be a safer alternative to the commonly used oxybenzone and has broader UV coverage than other options.

“Natural” sunscreens offer protection in the form of nanoparticles such as zinc or titanium dioxide, which are compounds that safely and effectively block UV rays without being absorbed into the skin. They can, however, be harmful if inhaled, so it’s best to avoid spray-on sunscreens in general.

- Ensure that the product is free of fragrance, with an SPF of 15 to 50.
- Apply frequently and liberally to all exposed skin, at least fifteen to thirty minutes before sun exposure, every two hours, and after swimming or lots of sweating.
- The recommended dose of sunscreen is 2 mg/cm^2 which translates to a shot-glass amount for an adult. Adjust according to the size of your child.
- Zinc and titanium-based products may leave a harmless white residue on the skin that can be washed off once out of the sun.

Other ways to protect your kids from excessive sun:

- Children under the age of six months are more vulnerable to UV damage, but they’re not yet ready for sunscreen. Keep them in the shade and covered with appropriate clothing as much as possible.
- Older children can wear clothing and hats that block UVA and UVB rays.
- Play outside in the morning or late afternoon. The sun is most potent at midday.
- UV-ray exposure can occur even on cloudy days and is amplified around water, sand, and snow.
- Outfit your kids with UV-blocking sunglasses.
- Eat the right foods. A diet rich in antioxidant and anti-inflammatory foods (such as brightly coloured fruits and vegetables) can help protect the skin from DNA damage due to excessive UV exposure. Emerging evidence suggests that some phytochemicals and bioflavonoids can protect the skin and reduce sun damage. (A healthy diet shouldn’t replace adequate topical protection from the sun.)



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Bug spray

It is important to take precautions against stings and bites not only because they are irritating, but because some critters can carry infection. Mosquitoes and ticks are frequent agents of concern.

DEET is the active ingredient in standard bug repellents and is effective against ticks, mosquitoes, and flies. Unfortunately, DEET persists in the environment, harms other organisms, and is an irritant to human tissues. Although its risk appears to be low when used as recommended, icaridin/picaridin (hydroxyethyl isobutyl piperadine carboxylate) may be a safer option. Natural repellents such as essential oils (particularly eucalyptus and citronella) may be effective, but less so against ticks. Combining multiple methods may offer greater protection than relying on one.

If you spend time outside in an area where there is particular concern (e.g., Lyme disease), using a DEET-containing product may be a good idea. However, avoid anything with greater than ten percent DEET for children under twelve and apply sparingly. No insect repellent should be used on infants under six months.

Other ways to protect from bug bites:

- Avoid the places insects like to gather, such as standing water and long grass.
- Wear socks, long pants, and sleeves—and tuck everything in!
- Stay inside at dusk and dawn, when possible.
- Protect infants under six months with fine mesh covers for carriers and strollers.
- Check all family members, including pets, for ticks daily if you're in an endemic area.
- Use repellents sparingly in an open space, avoiding mouths, eyes, broken skin, and hands.
- Use a bug net when sleeping.
- If going to a malaria-endemic area, talk to your healthcare provider about the pros and cons of pharmaceutical prophylaxis.

Essential Oil Bug Spray

9 drops citronella essential oil

9 drops peppermint essential oil 9 drops lemongrass
essential oil

1 tablespoon grain alcohol (vodka)

¼ cup spring water

Combine all ingredients in a spray bottle. Let it mellow for a few days, allowing the essential oils to blend. Spray on skin as needed or use as room spray (around windows and doors) to keep mosquitoes away.