

## GROWING UP

### Red is a Good Color for Kids' Clothes, Not Their Skin

By Dan Florell, Ph.D. & Praveena Salins, M.D.

The sun has finally broken through the clouds and it is a gorgeous, sunny day. This is the type of day made for playing outdoors! The kids are quickly putting on their shoes and running out the door to enjoy the beautiful day. Four hours later, they come back in looking flush with all of their exertions. Unfortunately the red flush on their faces isn't simply from exertion, it is sunburn.

Even parents with the best of intentions can forget or rationalize not taking proper precautions before their children go out and play. Sometimes we figure that they will only be out for a little while and are not likely to get burned. Other times we think that if it is sunny but cooler out, there is little risk. Finally there is the simple fact that we don't want to have to go through the whole sunblock application process which involves smearing sunblock over every exposed part of the child's body. Of course none of these rationalizations prevents children from getting overexposed to the sun.

Sunblock is one of the biggest keys in preventing sunburns. However there are so many different products out there, it is difficult to tell what is best for your child. In general, it is important to pick a broad spectrum sunblock with protection against ultraviolet A (UVA) and ultraviolet B (UVB) which is rated at a SPF of 15 or above (SPF 30 for infants over 6 months). The sunblock should have ingredients such as zinc oxide and titanium dioxide in it. Avoid sunblocks that contain oxybenzone as it can have estrogen-like effects when absorbed through the skin.

When wearing sunblock, make sure to put it on at least 15 minutes prior to going out in the sun and with infants over 6 months apply it 30 minutes before going out. Once out, sunblock needs to be reapplied every 2 hours particularly after swimming, sweating, and/or drying off.

Other general guidelines for all kids is to wear hats with brims. The hat brims need to go all the way around so no baseball caps. In addition, the kids need to wear sunglasses that have 100% UVA/UVB protection. This can be a challenge with younger children so make sure the sunglasses fit and emphasize how cool they look with them on. When kids do go out, try to limit their time particularly between 10am to 4pm when the sun is at its' most intense. Also, it is easy to forget that reflective surfaces such as pools and sand can magnify the sun's rays and increase the risk of sunburn.

It may seem like a lot of effort to just go outside, but it is worth it. Try to get your children in a habit of putting on sunscreen, covering up, and wearing sunglasses before going out. Before you know it, you won't have to remind them every time as they just do it as part of going outside!

#### Biography:

Dan Florell, Ph.D., is an assistant professor at Eastern Kentucky University and has a private practice, MindPsi ([www.mindpsi.net](http://www.mindpsi.net)). Praveena Salins, M.D., is a pediatrician at Madison Pediatric Associates ([www.madisonpeds.com](http://www.madisonpeds.com)).