



Sun Safety for Schools

MARYLAND STATE SCHOOL HEALTH SERVICES GUIDELINE

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Foreword

There is a strong relationship between academic achievement and a child's physical, emotional and mental health. This link is the foundation for providing school health services as an important component of a school program. School health services provide primary prevention aimed at keeping students in schools through appropriate screenings, early identification of children at risk for physical, emotional and mental health concerns, and case management of students with chronic health concerns.

The Annotated Code of Maryland, Education Article, §7-401 requires the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) to jointly develop public standards and guidelines for school health programs. The following guideline is developed in accordance with that requirement and is based on the expressed needs of the local school health services programs. These guidelines contain recommendations for minimum standards of care and current best practices for the health service topics addressed. It is intended that these guidelines will be used by the local school systems in developing local school health services policies and procedures as a means to assist local school health services programs in providing consistent and safe care to the students of Maryland. Specific laws and regulations that direct school nursing practice or other health services are identified in the guidelines.

GUIDELINES FOR SCHOOLS ON SUN SAFETY

Introduction

Skin cancer is the most common form of cancer with one million cases diagnosed each year in the United States. Sun safety practices that are begun early in life and consistently followed contribute to the prevention of skin cancer. School nurses promote positive health practices. Facilitating sun safety habits in the school setting can assist students and staff in reducing potential risk for ultraviolet-related illnesses.

Purpose

The purpose of this guideline is to provide school nurses with direction for promoting sun safety among students and staff in the school environment. The Annotated Code of Maryland, Education Article, §7-401 requires the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) to jointly develop public standards and guidelines for school health programs, which requires county boards of education to ensure compliance with these guidelines. The Code of Maryland Regulations 13A.05.05.13G will be amended to incorporate the provisions of this new law.

Background

Sunlight provides several health benefits, including warmth, light, and vitamin D synthesis in the body. Overexposure to the sun's ultraviolet (UV) radiation can cause some harmful effects to the body; some of those effects are skin cancers, eye diseases, and premature wrinkling.

Skin cancer is the most common and the most preventable of all cancers. It is estimated that one in five Americans will develop skin cancer. There are three types of skin cancer: basal cell, squamous cell, and malignant melanoma. Basal cell cancer is the least invasive of skin cancers and the most commonly diagnosed skin cancer. Squamous cell cancer can spread to other parts of the body. Both basal cell and squamous cell cancers are highly curable with early detection and treatment. Malignant melanoma is the most aggressive skin cancer; it is the cause of about 75% of all skin cancer deaths. If a person receives one or two blistering sunburns before 18 years of age, the risk for developing melanoma is doubled.

Cataracts are the most common eye disease caused by long hours in the sun without protection from UV radiation. One of the other effects of overexposure to the sun is premature aging of the skin. Leathery skin and wrinkles are some cumulative effects of sun damage.

Sun Safe Facts

- ❑ Sun rays are strongest between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.
- ❑ The sun's rays can reflect off surfaces such as buildings, water, snow, and sidewalks.
- ❑ Wide-brimmed hats reduce sun exposure to the face, head, ears, and neck.
- ❑ Clothing protects skin against UV radiation. Darker colors absorb more UV light than lighter colors.

- ❑ Approved sunglasses provide 100% protection from UVA and UVB radiation.
- ❑ Sunscreens with a SPF 15 (sun protection factor) help block out UVB rays for a specific period of time.

Sun Safety and the School Environment

School nurses, school administrators, school staff, parents, students, and community partners may initiate a school-wide assessment of current sun safety habits among staff, students, school environment and school policies. This assessment may include information concerning student and staff use of hats and sunglasses when outside for physical education classes, recess, field trips, sports, field days, and other events. *Sunny Days, Healthy Ways* (see resources) provides a questionnaire for assessing sun safety in the school environment.

Once an assessment of existing sun safety practices is completed, specific recommendations can be determined and should include reviewing the local school system policy regarding the use of sunscreen by students. Sunscreen is not considered a medication and is intended to protect the skin from harmful effects of UV radiation. Develop a policy that allows students to use the sunscreen they bring to school. Consider the local school system's policy regarding hats in the development of a sun safety policy.

Role of the School Nurse

School nurses can enhance the wellness of school staff and students in the following ways:

- ❑ Advocate for and promote sun safety activities with the students and school staff; encourage skin checks and medical follow-up for questions; discourage use of tanning beds
- ❑ Assist with school assessment of sun safety
- ❑ Collaborate with community partners to promote sun safety throughout the school year
- ❑ Design procedures that detail specific sun safe behaviors for school sponsored events where long sun exposure times are anticipated
- ❑ Display sun safe habits on bulletin boards and in the health suite
- ❑ Facilitate student use of sunscreen prior to and during outdoor activities
- ❑ Include articles regarding sun safety in the school newsletter and on the school website
- ❑ Model sun safe practices
- ❑ Present sun safe information to parent/teacher associations and organizations
- ❑ Provide individual health counseling to students and school staff
- ❑ Support classroom instruction and activities by offering teachers information, resources, and sample lesson plans. Provide health messages on morning and afternoon announcements

Selected Resources

American Cancer Society. www.cancer.org. 800-ACS-2345

Skin Cancer Facts:

http://www.cancer.org/docroot/PED/content/ped_7_1_What_You_Need_To_Know_About_Skin_Cancer.asp?sitearea=PED

Sun Safety Quiz:

http://www.cancer.org/docroot/PED/content/PED_7_1x_Take_the_Sun_Safety_Quiz.asp?sitearea=PED

Ban the Burn: High School Curriculum. The Ulman Cancer fund for Young Adults
www.ulmanfund.org

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Guidelines for school programs to prevent skin cancer.* MMWR 2002; 51 (No. RR-4).

Fraser, K. (2002). *Fit, Healthy, And Ready To Learn: A School Health Policy Guide; Part II: Policies to Promote Sun Safety and Prevent Skin Cancer.* National Association of State Boards of Education.

National Association of School Nurses (NASN). (2005). *Position Paper, "The School Nurse and Sun Protection."* www.nasn.org.

Sunguard Your Skin: An Educational Kit for Middle School Students. (Revised 2001). Coalition for Skin Cancer Prevention in Maryland. 800-492-1056 ext. 340. Available free of charge.

SunGuard Man Online. www.sunguardman.org.

Sunny Days Healthy Ways: Sun-Safe School Guide

<http://www.sdhw.info/pdfs/schoolguide02.pdf>

The Sun Safety Activity Guide. (2000). The Environmental Health Center, a Division of the National Safety Council. 1025 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 1200, Washington, D.C. 20036.
<http://www.nsc.org/EHC/sunwise/activity.htm#pdf>

The SunWise School Program. (2000). Environmental Protection Agency.

<http://www.epa.gov/docs/sunwise/summary.html>

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