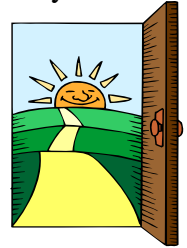


# Fun in the Sun!

## Going Outdoors!

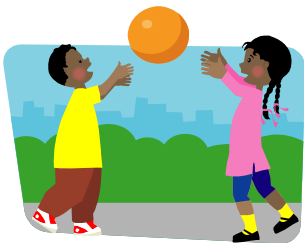
Children love to play in enriched outdoor environments, experiencing a wonderful sense of freedom as they explore their world! They can hear nature sounds or city noises. They can feel the sun on their faces and smell the flowers in the garden. Who hasn't experienced the pleasure of watching a joyful child leaping, rolling, or running in the park? Who hasn't listened to a child singing or shouting, as they release the day's stresses? Providing stimulating and inviting outdoor environments will help children discover their world through play.



**When should children go outside?** Most days! The NC General Statute, Article 7, Chapter 110, states, "Children should go outside every day, weather permitting". That is defined as "almost every day, unless there is active precipitation, a weather advisory, or public announcements related to environmental conditions such as high levels of pollution, [and/or] extreme cold or heat that might cause health problems". (FPG) *Caring for Our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards: Guidelines for Out-of-Home Child Care, 2nd Edition*, explains further stating, "Weather that imposes a significant health risk shall include wind chill at or below 15 degrees F and heat index of 90 degrees F."

## Being Safe Outside!

Although the sun feels great, it can also be hazardous because it exposes people to UV radiation, which causes skin cancer. Many adults die each year from skin cancer resulting from overexposure to the sun.



Here are a few tips for enjoying the sun safely.

- Limit time in direct sun between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. and drink plenty of water.
- Find activities that can be done in the shade.
- Always use ample sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 15 (with written parental permission) and apply it 30 minutes before sun exposure. Re-apply every two hours, and after water sports. Consider using a lip balm with sunscreen.
- Sunscreen is not recommended for infants under six months of age. Infants should play in the shade only.
- Children should wear a hat with a wide brim, and sunglasses with 100% UVA and UVB protection.
- When possible dress children in tightly woven, loose-fitting clothing.

## The Ultraviolet (UV) Index

The ozone layer is part of the atmosphere that shields the earth from the sun's UV rays. Pollution is causing a thinning of the ozone layer. This means that more of the sun's harmful UVA and UVB rays reach the earth. UVA rays damage the deeper layers of skin. UVB rays cause sun burn. Both increase the risk for skin cancer.

The **UV Index** measures the intensity of the sun's UV rays on a scale of 1-15+. This indicates a person's risk of possible overexposure to the sun on a given day. Child care providers should be aware of their local UV Index before taking children outside. They can follow the guidelines described in the UV Index scale to protect them from overexposure to the sun.

UV Index		
Exposure Category	Index Number	Sun Protection Messages
<b>LOW</b> Green	<2	Safe to be outside. Wear sunglasses on bright days. Cover up and use sunscreen <b>SPF 15+</b> as needed.
<b>MODERATE</b> Yellow	3-5	Wear a hat and sunglasses. Use sunscreen <b>SPF 15+</b> . Seek shade during midday hours.
<b>HIGH</b> Orange	6-7	Wear a wide-brimmed hat, sunglasses, and wear a long-sleeved shirt and pants when practical. Use sunscreen <b>SPF 15+</b> . Seek shade during midday hours.
<b>VERY HIGH</b> Red	8-10	<b>A shirt, hat and sunscreen SPF 15+ are a must.</b> Seek shade from 10AM – 4PM.
<b>EXTREME</b> Purple	11+	<b>A shirt, hat and sunscreen SPF 15+ are a must. Seek shade from 10AM – 4PM.</b>

To check the UV Index watch the local weather forecast or go to the Environmental Protection Agency UV Index forecast page, [www.epa.gov/sunwise/uvindex.html#map](http://www.epa.gov/sunwise/uvindex.html#map).

### What About Ozone?

Ozone sometimes presents a health risk. When ozone is in the upper atmosphere it protects the earth from ultraviolet rays, but when it is near the ground it is a major component of smog and can cause respiratory difficulties. Children and adults with asthma and other respiratory conditions may need to limit or avoid time spent outdoors. Current air quality information can be found at the following website:

<http://daq.state.nc.us/airaware/forecast/>.



Air quality is measured and communicated to the public using a color code and number system.

The chart below provides a summary of air quality conditions. To see a copy of the Air Quality Color Code Guide in full, providers can view the following website:

<http://daq.state.nc.us/airaware/forecast/codes.shtml>. Although weather conditions will occasionally prohibit outdoor play, children can (and should!) go outside most days.

### Excerpt from the Air Quality Color Code Guide

Good (Green) 0-50	Moderate (Yellow) 51-100	Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups (Orange) 101-150	Unhealthy (Red) 200	Very Unhealthy (Purple) 201-300
No health impacts	Unusually sensitive people should consider <b>LIMITING PROLONGED outdoor time</b>	Active children and adults, and people with respiratory disease should limit prolonged outdoor <b>EXERTION</b>	Same as orange except <b>EVERYONE, especially CHILDREN, should limit outdoor EXERTION</b>	Active children and adults and people with respiratory disease should <b>AVOID ALL OUTDOOR EXERTION</b> ; everyone else, especially children should <b>LIMIT OUTDOOR EXERTION</b>

#### References:

AAP, APHA, MCHB, HRSA. *Caring For Our Children*. National Health and Safety Performance Standards: Guidelines for Out-of-Home Child Care Programs. (2002). Standards relating to sunscreen. Retrieved 6/2/04 from: <http://nrckids.org/CFOC/index.html>.

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