



Leeds Well School Partnership

• Physical Activity • Physical Education • Sport

June Health and Safety Update

(Courtesy of the AfPE)

Sun Safety

The following guidance is designed to assist schools in determining how they should educate students about safe and unsafe exposure to the sun and how to reduce the risk of sun damage, including skin cancer.

Skin cancer is the UK's most common and rapidly increasing cancer. The potential for prolonged exposure to the sun and the hazards associated with that exposure while at school, either playing sport outdoors or on an educational visit should be considered as part of the risk assessment process, and measures put in place to minimise the risk.

Results from a recent national survey undertaken by the Melanoma Fund clearly reveals the need to educate young people about being safe in the sun.

Key findings include:

- 72% of coaches, leaders, and teachers have never received any training on sun or heat protection
- Only 16% of organisations have a separate sun protection policy
- 43% of those working with children outdoors say they feel unsupported or poorly supported by their organisation
- Just 4% believe all the children they work with truly understand sun safety
- 80% of respondents would like access to free or discounted sunscreen

"These findings are concerning but not surprising. They highlight the very reason we want to support this sector with free, practical sun safety resources. Although so many leaders are on the case, these findings are a wake-up call for everyone, including parents who trust their children to organised outdoor activities," says Michelle Baker, CEO of the Melanoma Fund".

Sun safety habits begin in childhood, as does melanoma. Just one blistering sunburn in childhood doubles the risk of skin cancer later in life. Melanoma is the most common cancer in young adults, which makes it even more crucial that we protect our children from harmful UV exposure.

Parents also play a vital role in setting a good example for sun safety. By showing children how to properly apply sunscreen, rather than just smearing it on their faces, they help teach kids how to protect themselves effectively. This is crucial when children participate in outdoor activities.

Outdoor coaches and leaders are in a unique position to lead by example and instil sunsafe habits early on. But the data shows that only 11% of coaches regularly apply sunscreen in front of children, and just 19% wear a sun hat consistently.

To help organisations and individuals address gaps in education, awareness, and support, [the Melanoma Fund](#) offers two key resources:

Sunguarding Course: A free online course that offers accreditation and 3 CIMSPA CPD points, designed to help anyone working outdoors understand and manage the risks of UV exposure.

Outdoor Kids Sun Safety Code: Aimed at empowering organisations to create and implement sun safety policies specifically for children in outdoor sports and activities, educating both adults and children.

The Association for Physical Education is a partner of the Melanoma Fund and joins over 100 national governing bodies of sport and major outdoor organisations to actively support the 'Outdoor Kids Sun Safety Code' campaign, which aims to ensure sun and heat protection has a vital place in health and safety management.

Accreditation to the Melanoma Fund campaign offers a set of FREE downloadable resources including the OK Code, template policies, the Sun-Sorted quiz, posters and key content, all designed to keep action easy to implement, effective and consistent.

There are three core elements to the **Outdoor Kids Sun Safety Code**:

- Education
- Protection
- Leading by Example.

The Outdoor Kids Sun Safety Code is for groups and individuals and is designed to support those working outdoors with Key Stage 2 children.

For more information about the Outdoor Kids Sun Safety Code, visit: www.melanoma-fund.co.uk/ok-sun-safety-code/

Hazards of Sun Exposure

- **Sunburn** – It only takes a few episodes of sunburn to more than double a child's risk of getting melanoma in later life. Sunburn can be a painful and uncomfortable consequence of overexposure in the sun, however the cumulative damage to the skin, especially from overexposure in childhood, can increase the risks of skin cancer later in life.
- **Skin type** – Some people are more at risk of skin cancer than others, especially those with family history, those with lots of moles, or those with fair or freckled skin who tend to burn more easily than others. It is important that everyone understands their skin type, vulnerability and acts accordingly to avoid overexposure.
- **Heat rash** – This is a rash of red or pink spots found on the body areas covered by clothing. The sweat ducts become blocked and swell, which may cause discomfort and itching. Clothing or scratching can irritate the rash areas, and a skin infection may occur.
- **Heat cramps** – These can occur in muscles after exercise because sweating causes the body to lose water and salt and minerals. The loss of salt and water affects the exercised muscles with leg muscles being most affected. The cramps may not occur until sometime after the exercise and may be accompanied by fatigue, nausea and vomiting.
- **Heat oedema** (swelling in legs and hands) – Many people get swollen hands or feet and ankles when they sit or stand for a long time while in a hot environment.
- **Heat tetany** (hyperventilation and heat stress) – This is usually related to short periods of stress in intense heat environments, such as intense physical activity in very high temperatures. Under these conditions a person will hyperventilate, which may cause respiratory problems, numbness or tingling, or muscle spasms.
- **Fainting** – This occurs when blood pressure falls as a result of the blood vessels expanding due to the heat.
- **Heat exhaustion** – This can occur when a person sweats a lot and does not drink enough liquids to replace those lost fluids. This will lead to feeling light-headed, nauseous with a headache, pale cool moist skin, heat cramps and blurred vision.
- **Heatstroke** – This can occur when a person cannot sweat enough to cool the body. It generally develops when a person is working or exercising in hot weather. Eventually, the body cannot regulate its own temperature and the body temperature continues to rise which can cause the body's organs to stop functioning. A person with heatstroke may stop sweating, and become confused, delirious, or unconscious. The skin is red, hot and dry even under the armpits.

Heatstroke is a life-threatening medical emergency so if you suspect this, it is important to call 999 immediately.

Other Risk Factors

- **Age** – Children cannot adapt to high temperatures as well as adults because of their size and limited sweat capacity. Adults over the age of 65 are not able to cool their bodies as well as younger adults and are 12 times more likely to develop heatstroke.
- **Obesity** – This carries the risk of decreased blood flow to the skin and holds heat in because of their insulating layer of body fat.
- **Recent illness** – Vomiting or diarrhoea or an eating disorder where there has already been some dehydration and a loss of electrolytes.
- Some **prescribed medications** can result in an adverse skin reaction that includes an exaggerated sunburn, itching or pain. These so-called photosensitising drugs include some antibiotics, antifungal agents, diuretics, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs and psychoactive drugs.

Effective Control Measures

- **Clothing** – Loose fitting, lightweight, clothing with a tight weave that looks opaque when held up to the light.
- **Hats** – Wide-brimmed or peaked hats/caps to protect the head and face.
- **Hydration** – Make sure water is available at all times. Advise students to bring in a bottle of water on sports days/educational visits when higher levels of physical activity will take place or where there will be prolonged exposure to the sun. Make up bottles of electrolyte substitute to give at the first sign of dehydration, heat exhaustion, etc.
- **Shade** – Ensure there are suitable areas of shade, particularly during the middle of the day. If shade does not exist it can be created with temporary sun pagodas. Any future redevelopment of sites should include shaded areas.
- **Sunscreen** – Advise all parents to ensure their child applies a SPF30+ sunscreen before they attend school and have a small bottle for re-application if outdoors for prolonged periods (i.e. sports days/educational visits).