

The Catlins Area School

Term 4, 2019

Sun Protection

Ultraviolet radiation (UVR)

New Zealand has the highest melanoma incidence in the world. Episodes of sunburn (even just one), caused by excessive exposure to ultraviolet radiation (UVR) in childhood and adolescence, have been shown to cause skin damage and to increase the risk of melanoma and other skin cancers later in life. Overexposure to UVR can also cause eye damage, and can suppress the proper functioning of the immune system.

Ultraviolet Index (UVI)

The Ultraviolet Index (UVI) is an international, scientific measure of the level of ultraviolet radiation (UVR) reaching the Earth's surface. New Zealand has particularly high levels of UVR from September to April. UVR levels also vary throughout the day: levels are higher between 10 am and 4 pm, and peak at solar noon (1–1.30 pm during daylight saving).

It is important to note that UVR levels are not related to air temperature or weather. The level is highest in the middle of the day, even if the maximum temperature is later in the day. During the months of daylight saving (particularly between 10 am and 4 pm), protection is required against the high levels of UVR, even on cloudy and/or cool days.

 See information from NIWA about the **UV Index** and **UVI forecasts for specific sites**.

Sun protection policy

Living in New Zealand, we can enjoy the sunshine and reduce our risk of harm by being sun smart. While it is important to be sun smart at every age, sun-smart behaviour is particularly important for children as getting sunburnt in childhood and adolescence increases the risk of melanoma and other skin cancers later in life.

Our sun protection policy applies during terms 1 and 4 on days with low/no cloud cover as indicated by teachers. The Catlins Area School aims to:

- protect our students and staff from excessive exposure to the sun's UVR while they are at school, or involved with off-site school activities
- educate the whole school community about the harmful effects of excessive exposure to the sun's UVR, and how to keep themselves safe.


The school models sun-safe practices between 10 am and 4 pm, and ensures that staff and students take the following steps to protect themselves.

Sunsafer behaviour

- We require students in years 1–6 to wear hats that shade the face, neck, and ears, whenever they are outside and involved in school activities. Students at school without a **hat** must remain in an allocated shaded area or inside at break times. Hats must be broad-brimmed (min. 7.5 cm), or legionnaire/bucket hats (min. 6 cm brim, deep crown). These hats provide significant protection to the eyes.
- We encourage students to protect themselves with broad spectrum sunscreen of at least SPF30 (Sun Protection Factor), and by sitting/playing in the shade where possible.
- When outside and involved in school activities, staff model appropriate sun-safe behaviour by wearing hats that shade the face, neck, and ears, and making use of shade

whenever possible. Parents are also encouraged to wear sunhats and be positive role models when picking up children or participating in school activities.

- We encourage students to wear swimwear that covers them as much as possible when swimming outdoors, e.g. long-sleeve rash tops.
- We encourage students to wear clothing that protects the skin (e.g. long sleeve tops) when at risk of extended sun exposure, such as sports days and picnics etc.


See  **Sunscreen** for information about correct application, and an explanation about SPF ratings.

School activities

- Students eat lunch in the shade as appropriate.
- We encourage students to keep hydrated by drinking water.
- We try to schedule outdoor activities to minimise exposure to the sun during the summer.
- We include sun protection in our EOTC risk management planning for on-site and off-site activities.

Educating the school community

The school educates the whole school community by:

- providing information about skin cancer and its health risk in class programmes every year. See  **SunSmart Schools**.
- alerting caregivers to the health problem of excessive UVR (see **Everyday communication**)
- informing parents of new students about our sun protection policy.

Board responsibilities




The board:

- includes shade creation as a priority for its property planning
- ensures ongoing assessment of sun-smart behaviour, shade provision, and curriculum emphasis
- reviews the sun protection policy with the staff and parents at least every three years.

What about terms 2 and 3?

Sun exposure has benefits, including increasing Vitamin D absorption. During terms 2 and 3, UVR is generally at a low level and students do not normally need to wear hats or sunscreen, or stay in the shade. They should be encouraged to actively enjoy the sun. However, from the beginning of September, levels of UVR start to increase, so if the children will be exposed to the sun for long periods – such as at a sports day – sun protection practices are appropriate.

Resources

- **SunSmart Schools** 
- SunSmart: **Running a SunSmart event** 
- **NZ Cancer Society** 
- NIWA: **UV Index** and **UVI forecasts for specific sites** 
- uv2Day – A free app available from Google Play or the App Store (data is provided by NIWA and the app is supported by the Cancer Society of New Zealand)

Release history: Term 1 2017, 1 April 2014, 13 September 2012, 30 March 2011, 31 May 2008