

# **Overview of the *No Sun for Baby Program***

## **Introduction**

Sun protection habits must begin early in life and be taught as routine preventive health care. Excessive exposure to the sun causes most skin cancers and numerous studies have shown that sunburns during the first 20 years are linked to melanoma, the most fatal of skin cancers. Safe sun practices, such as using sunscreen with a Sun Protection Factor (SPF) of 15 or greater, wearing protective clothing, hats and sunglasses, and seeking shade during peak sun exposure times, can prevent many of these sunburns.

In 2001, the Maine Skin Cancer Task Force launched the *No Sun for Baby Program*, a sun protection program for parents of newborns, in Portland area hospitals. In addition to incorporating education on skin protection in childbirth education classes, as well as during baby bathing demonstrations, the *No Sun for Baby Program* provided parents with a Sun Safety Kit. Included in the Kit were a plastic pail and shovel, a baby sun hat, educational materials about newborn sun safety, and an evaluation postcard. Prior to discharge, parents received the Kit and verbal reminders of how to appropriately protect the baby's skin from sun exposure.

According to feedback from both parents and hospital staff, the *No Sun for Baby Program* was overwhelmingly successful. Parents appreciated the information on how to care for their baby's skin and found the Sun Safety Kit to be helpful. Hospital staff reported that implementing the No Sun for Baby Program was very simple with little or no extra time required to do so. They also reported it was easy to include sun protection information in both childbirth education classes and during bathing demonstrations.

Based on these initial findings, the Maine Skin Cancer Task Force is making the materials and information available to all hospitals in Maine. We welcome any comments on how better to improve the program and are available to talk with you or your staff about implementing the *No Sun for Baby Program* at your hospital. Maternity nurses and childbirth educators can play a special role in starting sun safety education for all parents of newborns in Maine.

## **Purpose**

The purpose of the *No Sun for Baby Program* is to educate the parents of newborns on the methods for and importance of sun safety for their baby.

## **Audience**

The primary audience for the *No Sun for Baby Program* is expecting and new parents.

## **Materials**

- \* Sun safety kit, including:
  - \* Plastic pail and shovel (optional – could use plastic bag with hospital name)
  - \* Baby sun hat
  - \* Educational information on baby sun safety
  - \* Evaluation postcard
  
- \* Information for staff on skin cancer and sun safety for newborns

## **Components**

The components of the *No Sun for Baby Program* are:

- \* Inclusion of information on sun safety during childbirth education classes. This can be incorporated into the general safety section or during the “how to care for your baby” section.
- \* Inclusion of information on sun safety while teaching parents about bathing their baby.
- \* Distribution of the Sun Safety Kit to parents prior to hospital discharge
- \* Keeping track of the number of Sun Safety Kits distributed to parents
- \* Compiling results from the evaluation postcards received
- \* Responding to the Maine Skin Cancer Task Force annually on the number of Sun Safety Kits distributed and feedback from parents

## **Evaluation**

There are three methods to determine the success of the No Sun for Baby Program at your hospital. They are:

- \* Evaluation postcard, which asks parents to comment of the usefulness of the information and materials related to newborn sun safety
- \* Number of Sun Safety Kits distributed
- \* Feedback from nursing and childbirth education staff on the Program

## **Cost**

The cost of the Program is variable. Using the suggested materials listed above, the cost is approximately \$6.50 per newborn (see below). However, there are many ways to reduce the cost of the Program. For example, plastic pail and shovel could be replaced with a plastic bag bearing the name of the hospital. Also, rather than buying the baby sun hats, your hospital auxiliary group, local high school home economics class, or sewing circle could make the hats.

Plastic pail and shovel – \$0.75-\$1.00 per bucket

Baby sun hat – \$5.00 per hat

Educational information – Free from the American Cancer Society

Stamped evaluation postcard – Postage cost

## Key Messages for Parents of Newborns

### \* General Guidelines

- As best as possible, limit your child's sun exposure, particularly between 10:00am and 4:00pm.
- When your child is outside, use a sun hat that protects the ears and neck, a long-sleeved shirt, long pants, and shade your child as much as possible

### \* Sunscreen Use

- Sunscreen is not recommended for your child until s/he is six months old.
- When your child is 6 months old, remember to put the sunscreen on at least 20 minutes before going outside. Place it on all areas exposed to the sun, rub it in well, and reapply it every two hours or after being in the water.

### \* Going in the Water

- Infants can go in the water but limit the amount of time they spend in the sun while in the water. Protect your child with a brimmed hat (to protect the face, ears, and neck) and a long-sleeved t-shirt, if possible.

### \* Surfaces that Reflect the Sun

- Make sure to cover-up with protective clothing when outside because sand, concrete, water, and snow can reflect the sun's rays onto your child's skin.
- Winter sun can be just as damaging as summer sun, and snow also causes an intense reflection of the sun onto your baby's sensitive skin.

## Commonly Asked Questions about Sun Safety

### ***Can I put any kind of sunscreen on my newborn baby?***

No. Doctors do not recommend the use of sunscreen for your child until they reach six months of age because of the possibility of allergic skin reactions, such as a dry, red rash.

### ***What are the most important things I can do to protect my child from now until they are six months old?***

As best as possible, limit your child's sun exposure, particularly between 10:00am and 4:00pm, when the sun's rays are most intense. When your child is outside, use a sun hat, long-sleeved shirt, long pants, and shade your child as much as possible.

### ***Can I take my child in the water during the first six months?***

Yes. As best as possible, though, limit the amount of time spent in the water under the sun. Try to protect your child with a sun hat and long-sleeved shirt. Remember, a wet shirt offers less sun protection than a dry one.

### ***After six months, can I use sunscreen on my child? If so, what should I use?***

After your child is six months old, doctors recommend sunscreen with an SPF 15 or greater. Remember to put sunscreen on your child at least 20 minutes before going outside. Place it on all areas exposed to the sun, rub it in well, and reapply every two hours or after swimming.

To test for possible allergic reactions, put a small amount of sunscreen on the baby's wrist. If a skin reaction occurs, do not use sunscreen.

### ***Is there a specific type of sunscreen that I should use on my child?***

Sunscreen comes in two types: those that block the sun and those that absorb UV light. The best sunscreens combine both. Look for sunscreens that say broad spectrum which protects against both UVA and UVB rays. Water-based sunscreens are best for children because they do not sting the eyes. Waterproof or water-resistant sunscreens stay on longer in water. Remember, never put baby oil on your child's skin.

# *No Sun for Baby Sun Hat Pattern*

The newborn sun hat consists of 12 triangular pieces of material (you can mix and match the fabrics), binding tape, and cloth ties. The hat is double-sided with 6 triangles to a layer. The layers are sewn together back to back with binding tape.

## **Materials**

½ yard of cotton fabric (45" wide or less) per hat

Thread to match

1 yard double fold bias tape

2 feet cotton tie

## **Things to Remember**

- Preshrink (wash) fabric before sewing
- ¼ inch seam allowances are used for construction

## **Beginning**

- Trace the pattern provided onto a piece of tissue paper to use as a stencil
- Cut 12 triangles from the material using the pattern

## **Outside of the Hat**

- Sew two triangles together lengthwise using a ¼ inch seam
- Continue sewing 6 pieces together and attach the first and last piece forming the outside of the hat

## **Inside of the Hat**

- For the second group of 6 pieces, sew pieces 1, 2, & 3 together. Sew pieces 4,5, & 6 together. Do not attach the two groups
- Add the cotton tie. Cut a piece of tape 12 inches long and place it between pieces 3 & 4. Sew the tape into the hat halfway down the seam by sewing the two pieces together.
- Repeat for pieces 1 & 6; the pieces will connect to form a circle

## **Finishing**

- Iron the seams flat on both layers
- Place the two layers wrong-sides together
- Sew a strip of (width) binding tape around the edge of the two circular pieces, binding the pieces together