

For safest skin protection, skip sunscreen pills, online recipes

Wouldn't it be great if a magic pill protected kids from sunburn? Parents wouldn't have to chase after their wet, sandy children with a bottle of lotion. Unfortunately, there is no quick solution.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends that parents use sunscreen that is labeled “broad-spectrum” with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 15 or higher.

Sunscreen is an over-the-counter drug that is regulated. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) makes sure that the product you apply on your child's skin is safe, effective and protects against ultraviolet A (UVA) and ultraviolet B (UVB) rays.

Recently, some parents have shared homemade sunscreen recipes online that are made with “natural” ingredients. But a study found that 68% of the recipes did not do a good job of protecting people from UV radiation. Some were popular on social media, such as a Pinterest recipe that was saved more than 21,000 times. A few online recipes included unsafe ingredients like PABA and oils that can cause skin rashes.

Sunscreen pills can be found in drugstore vitamin aisles and online. They claim to provide “natural” sun protection. Recently, the FDA warned four companies to remove unproven claims that their pills prevent sunburn, reduce early skin aging caused by the sun or protect against skin cancer.

The best way to protect kids who are in the sun? Experts advise applying 1 ounce (a shot glass) of sunscreen on exposed skin and face. Smaller children may require less, but most people do not use enough sunscreen.

When using spray sunscreen, experts recommend making four passes back and forth on each area of skin. Next, rub the spray evenly on the skin. Never spray directly on the face. Instead, spray it on your hands first and rub it onto your child's face.

Apply sunscreen before children go outside, and reapply every two hours or after swimming, towel drying or sweating, the AAP says.

Add layers of sun protection, including clothing, hats and sunglasses. It's best to keep children out of the sun between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. But when kids are outdoors at the hottest time of day, make sure they take breaks in the shade.

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