

## Overcoming barriers to achieving 100% SunSmart hat wearing.

This document covers solutions to overcoming common barriers to achieving 100% SunSmart hat wearing in primary schools.

Wearing a SunSmart hat is one of the easiest and most effective forms of sun protection in the school environment, and therefore is key when it comes to protecting children – and ourselves.

Having all students wearing the same SunSmart hat reinforces a sense of belonging and pride, helping to eliminate any risk of peer pressure that could exist if non-SunSmart hat wearing is allowed.



### Attitudes and beliefs towards SunSmart hat wearing

Common attitudes or beliefs held by students or teachers in your school that may lead to non-SunSmart hat wearing behaviour include:

- ★ **The perception that a SunSmart hat is not “cool” or fashionable.**
- ★ **The SunSmart hat doesn’t look how they want or feels uncomfortable.**
- ★ **Low awareness and knowledge of best practice sun protection and its importance.**

#### Solutions

- Ensure the school has clear and consistent rules about SunSmart hat wearing.
- Set an expectation that students in all grades are required to wear SunSmart hats whilst they are at school.
- Encourage staff to promote the school rules about SunSmart hat wearing. Use the visual cues such as the **No hat, play in the shade** poster to support staff with SunSmart messaging.
- Motivate staff and visitors to role model SunSmart behaviours. Use the **Importance of being a SunSmart teacher** presentation or provide hats for teachers to wear on duty. Display the **We are proudly SunSmart** poster to remind visitors that sun safety is everyone’s responsibility.
- Educate students in the classroom about UV radiation and skin cancer by using the **Science and Technology and PDHPE classroom activities** and **Quick SunSmart Activities**.

## Forgetful students

There is no denying that students can just forget or mislay their SunSmart hat sometimes. Students may also forget their SunSmart hat on purpose, maybe to avoid outdoor activities.

### Solutions

- Place visual cues around the classroom, such as the **Got your hat?** poster to help remind students to put on their SunSmart hat before heading outdoors.
- Encourage parents to use the **What I need to take to school** and **What do I need to do this morning?** resources at home.
- Positively reinforce SunSmart behaviour at school, using the **Reward system for SunSmart behaviours**.
- Set up a system for students to borrow a spare hat from the school.

## Setting up a spare hat borrowing system

When setting up a spare hat system, it is best to minimise the potential cost and administration time required. The clearer the system for borrowing and tracking hats, the better. Label the spare hats to help with tracking any that are mislaid.

### Other considerations include:

- How will students access and 'sign out' the spare hats?
- Who will administer the system? E.g. office staff, duty teacher, senior student roster
- What will be the system for returning hats?
- How will lost hats be dealt with?
- What criteria will you use to identify frequent borrowers and how will you assist them, to ensure that they own a hat and remember to bring it to school?

**Note:** Having hats borrowed by different students does not present a health risk from head lice. Head lice need warmth and blood to stay alive. They do not survive long on clothing or personal items. For more information refer to the NSW Department of Education **website**.

## Financial challenges

Financial challenges may arise for families at your school that are unable to purchase a new SunSmart hat for their child.

### Solutions

- Advise parents how they can access financial support.
- Organise with the uniform shop to sell SunSmart school hats at a reduced price, or at cost price. This will depend on who runs your uniform shop and you may need to conduct some education and negotiation to achieve this.
- Ask the Parents and Citizens' Committee to fund purchasing SunSmart hats for all students; for students who don't have one; or each new Kindergarten intake, year on year. You may use some of the other resources from the **SunSmart Hat-Wearing Toolkit** to help educate and persuade the Committee, such as the **Sourcing funding for SunSmart hats** presentation.
- Source funding to purchase SunSmart hats elsewhere. For example, local businesses may be interested in funding this specific initiative.
- Set up a second-hand clothing pool which includes SunSmart hats.

## Being SunSmart while playing sport

Ideally, students will wear their SunSmart hat while participating in sport. However, Cancer Council NSW recognise this isn't always practical, particularly when playing sport at a competitive level. It is the decision of each school to define rules around SunSmart practices while participating in sport.

### Solutions

- Allow students to wear a baseball cap or no hat during sport, or only during competitive sport, but at no other times.
- Have SPF30 or higher, broad-spectrum water-resistant sunscreen available for students to use.
- Clearly communicate the rules and reason for allowing baseball caps or no hat during sport to students and the school community, including through the uniform shop.

If you are concerned about supplying sunscreen to your students, read the Cancer Council NSW **Sunscreen Information Sheet**.

## Cultural considerations and skin tone

There is a common misconception that people with darker skin are not at risk of skin cancer.

All skin types can be damaged by unprotected exposure to UV radiation. Even though skin cancer is less common amongst people with darker skin tones, skin cancers that do occur are often detected at a later and more dangerous stage.

### Solutions

- When the UV Index is 3 or above, use a combination of sun protection measures including shade, clothing (including hats), sunscreen and sunglasses.
- Download and check the **SunSmart App** daily to know when sun protection is required.
- Help dispel the myth about skin tone and skin cancer risk by displaying the **Truth about UV** poster.
- Educate parents/carers, students and teachers about UV, skin cancer and sun protection, using the **SunSmart communications** and other education resources from the **SunSmart Hat-Wearing Toolkit**.

**Note:** Sensible sun protection does not put people at risk of vitamin D deficiency. If a parent/carer is concerned about their child's having a vitamin D deficiency Cancer Council NSW recommends they consult their GP.

For more information and resources to help students achieve 100% SunSmart hat wearing, check out our **SunSmart Hat-Wearing Champion Guide** and **SunSmart Hat-Wearing Toolkit**.

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