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# Childcare and children's health

An information sheet for parents

## Transition to School

Preparing your child to begin school is an exciting time for you and your child.

We all want to see our children happy and settled, and a good start to school carries long term social and educational benefits. As a parent, you play an important role in helping your child start school with confidence.

While the transition to school is usually a happy experience, in some cases starting school may be a period of uncertainty. This is a new stage for you and your child, but throughout the many changes in your child's life in this period, you remain constant. You can be the bridge for your child as they move between home, childcare and school.

### Supporting basic skills

Children are expected to be more independent and responsible for themselves at school. There are some basic skills, including dressing themselves and going to the toilet unaided, that children need to master before they commence school. Social skills are especially important. Provide opportunities for your child to build these skills and praise their progress.



### Preparing your child for the transition to school

- Talk with your child about school. Give your child opportunities to ask questions in their own way and their own time
- Talk with your child's carer. Find out about any transition to school program or activities and get involved in these
- Speak positively about school and your own school experiences
- Involve yourself with the school – your own level of comfort and familiarity with the school is important. If you are confident and comfortable with the school, your child will pick this up
- If possible, meet your child's teacher
- Encourage your child to express their feelings and thoughts and to express/ask questions when they need assistance.

### Familiarity with the new environment helps smooth the transition to school

- Arrange 'get-togethers' with your child and others who will be going to the same school
- Visit the school out of school hours so your child becomes familiar with the layout of the grounds. Practice using the drinking taps, find where the toilets are
- Practice school activities, such as wearing uniforms, carrying backpacks and eating from lunch boxes. Going on a family picnic can help children practice these skills in a fun and practical way
- Make these experiences as fun and positive as possible.

*QAIS – Quality Areas 3 and 4, Principle 2.1*

*FDCQA – Quality Area 3, Principle 1.3*

*This Parent Fact Sheet is available in different community languages and can be downloaded from the Early Childhood Connections website [www.ecconnections.com.au](http://www.ecconnections.com.au)*

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## Health risks and benefits from the sun

The sun presents some serious health risks to children, but it also gives important health benefits. We need to protect children against the harmful effects of Ultra Violet (UV) radiation from the sun, but sun protection does not mean no sun exposure. You may have heard concerns about Vitamin D for children. Without some sun exposure, children may develop a condition that affects their bones. This condition is called rickets. Only small periods of sun exposure to a child's hands, arms and face are needed to protect children from this condition. Children usually receive enough sun for Vitamin D production from incidental sun exposure. Babies should not be directly exposed to the sun.

### *Five important sun protection measures*

#### **1. Sun protective clothing**

Choose loose fitting, close weave fabric clothing that covers as much skin as possible.

#### **2. Hats**

Hats should protect the face, neck and ears. Baseball caps and visors offer little protection to the cheeks, ears and neck and are not recommended. Suitable sun protection hats include:

- a soft legionnaire style hat, with a flap at the back that meets at the front peak
- a broad brimmed hat or a bucket style with a brim of at least 5 cm and a deep crown that sits easily on the child's head and still allows them to see and hear clearly

If the hat has a long strap and toggle, it may be safest to place the strap at the back of the child's head so it doesn't become a choking hazard.

#### **3. Sunscreen**

- Only use sunscreen with other forms of sun protection and on those small areas of the body not already covered by a hat and clothing. Don't use sunscreen to extend time spent out in the sun
- Sunscreens should only be used on babies if sun exposure is unavoidable, but shade and clothing provide the best protection. Don't expose babies under 12 months to direct sun
- Test the sunscreen on a small area of the child's skin before using it to make sure there's no reaction
- Use an SPF 30+ broad spectrum, water resistant sunscreen; check and follow the sunscreens use by date
- Apply the sunscreen 20 minutes before going outside and reapply every two hours.

#### **4. Shade**

Use shade whenever possible. Even while in the shade, UV radiation can reflect from surfaces such as water, sand and concrete so children need to wear a hat, appropriate clothing and apply sunscreen.

#### **5. Sunglasses**

It is important to protect children's eyes from sun damage. Sunglasses and protective swimming goggles specifically designed for babies and toddlers are available.

Sunglasses should:

- be marked EPF (eye protection factor) 10 and meet the Australian Standard 1067 (Sunglasses – Category 2, 3 or 4)
- be close fitting and stay on securely so that the arms don't become a safety hazard
- wrap around and cover as much of the eye area as possible.

**Talk to your child's carers about sun exposure and their practices to protect your child's health.**



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