



Fun in the Sun

Protect your kids from harmful summer rays.

Soaking in the afternoon sun is one of the many joys of boating. In fact, the idea of “more fun in the sun” is what gets our kids so excited about being out on the boat.

Unfortunately, like other things we enjoy in life, moderation is key when it comes to the sun. It only takes 20 minutes of sun exposure to get sunburned if you're not properly protected.

While we focus a lot on life jacket safety for our kids (as we should), we often overlook sun safety as an equally important aspect of boat safety.

Sunburns can be more than just painful for kids — they can have long-term effects by significantly increasing the lifetime risk of developing skin cancer. Studies show that most kids get much of their lifetime sun exposure before the age of 18.

The average boater spends 5.7 hours per outing on the water, and prime boating times typically correspond with peak UV exposure time: 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Even on a cloudy day, overexposure to UV radiation from the sun can occur. On boats, UV rays can be amplified considerably by reflecting off the water and fiberglass boats.

Between swimming and watersports, the time kids spend on the boat adds up quickly. Most kids are unaware of how much sun they are getting throughout the day, so it's essential that proactive steps be taken for sun precautions on a boat.

Sun smart boat kids

An integrated approach to sun safety is the best way to ensure that your kids are well protected in and around the water. Important ways you can safeguard kids from harmful rays include:

■ **Sunscreen:** Make sunscreen your No. 1 defense on-board your boat and when kids are spending time outdoors. Applying water-resistant SPF 50 sunscreen for kids should be a daily routine; it must be reapplied every two hours (and after swimming). Sunscreen sticks can make reapplying to the face easier throughout the day.

■ **Sun wear:** UV-protectant clothing, like UPF 50 swim shirts or swimsuits, ensure less skin is exposed to harmful UV rays. This clothing is ideal for kids who like to spend a lot of time in the water. Sun hats are helpful in keeping sun off of faces and are especially useful for babies with delicate heads to protect.

■ **Sunglasses:** Protect eyes from direct sunlight with a good pair of sunnies that include UV protection. Sun can have a damaging effect on the eyes, as well as the skin.

■ **Shade:** Invest in good canvas or sunshade coverage on your boat to give kids (and adults) an escape from the sun. Sun safety experts suggest seeking shade as much as possible between the hours of 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.

Getting overheated can be another adverse effect of the sun. Be sure kids are drinking plenty of water throughout the day and are able to cool off by swimming, seeking shade or taking a break in an air-conditioned boat cabin.

Proper sun protection doesn't need to limit your kid's summertime fun. Sun safety rules for your kids should be reinforced so that they become routine on your boat — just like your other boat safety rules.



Making sun safety a priority

As parents, it's important for us to set a good example for our kids; they look to us as role models and will often mimic our behaviors. If our kids see us wearing sunscreen and protective clothing, they'll be more likely to comply with our precautions for them.

Teaching your kids about sun safety when they are young will help them develop lifelong habits that will benefit them — and their skin — for years to come.

Luckily, most boaters these days understand the consequences of too much sun and know that sun exposure should be limited. Even the recreational boating industry has recognized this growing trend for sun safety, responding with boat designs and products that offer more sun protection.

Sun Safe Boating — a new industry campaign, championed by boat shade system manufacturer SureShade and supported by partners like Sunbrella and National Safe Boating Council — aims to help raise awareness for the important issue of sun safety in boating. The industry collaboration involves educating boaters by spreading the message that improved sun protection is critical to safety and enjoyment on the water.

You can learn more about sun protection for your kids and your entire crew at SUNSAFEBOATING.COM. ★



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