

SunSmart Policy

This policy has been developed in collaboration with SunSmart and endorsed by the Australasian College of Dermatologists and Optometry Australia.

1. Background

Ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun causes skin damage (sunburn, tanning and ageing) and skin cancer. More than two in three Australians will be diagnosed with skin cancer in their lifetime. However, most skin cancer and UV damage can be prevented by using sun protection.

When training, participating in, or watching sports, people often spend extended times outdoors during peak UV periods and are exposed to intense levels of direct and indirect UV. This places them at higher risk of UV damage, including sunburn and skin cancer. UV exposure may also increase the risk of eye diseases.

APS Sport is committed to supporting effective UV protection strategies to minimise risk and encourages all schools to comply with this policy.

2. Definitions

Ultraviolet (UV) radiation is a type of energy produced by the sun and some artificial sources, such as solariums and collariums. UV cannot be seen or felt. Direct and indirect UV exposure causes damage.

Sun protection times are times of day when UV levels are predicted to reach 3 or higher, as forecast by the Bureau of Meteorology. In Victoria, UV levels typically reach 3 or higher daily from mid-August to the end of April and sun protection is recommended for all skin types during these months. Sun protection is recommended from May to mid-August when sports are played outdoors for extended periods (e.g., during sports carnivals and events).

Skin cancer can result when UV radiation damages DNA in the skin cells. Skin cancer includes melanoma which can be life-threatening if left untreated.

Eye disease can occur with exposure to UV. Eye diseases include cataracts and growths on the eye, such as pterygium or cancer. Any time spent in the sun without eye protection can cause damage and increase the risk of disease over time. Optometry Australia recommends year-round use of UV protective sunglasses and broad-brimmed hats. The recommendation should be balanced with preventative measures for sport-related eye injuries in sports such as baseball, softball, cricket, hockey, lacrosse, tennis, and archery. In these cases, eyewear should be protective against injury and UV.

3. Mitigations

Safe practices to reduce the risks of sun exposure include monitoring, scheduling, increasing shaded areas, dressing appropriately, and applying sunscreen.

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Monitoring

Sports coordinators, coaches, participants and volunteers are encouraged to monitor the daily local sun protection times and UV levels via the SunSmart Widget on the APS Sport website or free SunSmart Global UV app.

Schedules

Where possible, training, competition and events should be scheduled to minimise exposure to UV. Schools can:

- select venues with sufficient shade for rest periods and visitors.
- use indoor venues where possible.
- schedule activities outside peak UV periods (i.e., earlier in the morning or later in the afternoon).
- reduce duration of warm-up activities and play and adding break times in the shade.
- rotate players frequently.

Shade

Shade is one of the most effective mitigations for sun exposure. Schools can:

- identify areas of shade from buildings, trees and other structures for players, staff and visitors.
- where natural shade is not available, erect temporary shade structures and encourage visitors to bring temporary shade (e.g. tents, marquees or umbrellas).
- rotate staff, officials and volunteers to shaded areas and encourage breaks in the shade.

Uniform / dress code (clothing, hats, sunglasses)

APS Sport acknowledges the importance of safe, inclusive uniform/dress code choices that maximise equitable participation and optimal performance. In addition, APS recommends the following minimum uniform requirements:

- Wear cool, well-ventilated clothing that covers as much skin as practicable prioritising coverage of the chest, shoulders and arms (with long sleeves preferred) and leg cover to at least the mid-thigh.
- Choose clothing that is made from densely woven fabric or UPF50+ fabric with cooling or moisture-wicking properties.
- Wear head protection. When sun protective hats are not practical in competition, caps are permitted when sunscreen is applied to the face, neck and ears.
- Where practical, wear close-fitting, wrap-around sunglasses that meet the Australian Standard 1067 (Sunglasses: Category 2, 3 or 4) and cover as much of the eye area as possible.

Where possible, wear:

- long or elbow-length t-shirt, or skins layered under singlets.
- long or knee-length pants, compression tights, leggings or skins layered under shorts.
- hats that shade the head, face, neck and ears (i.e., wide-brimmed, legionnaire or bucket style).

For sports that involve short periods of UV exposure, sun protective clothing may not be practical and sunscreen application is advised before and during competition.

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For sports with extended periods of UV exposure, practical sun protective clothing is the most effective mitigation.

Further uniform recommendations for individual sports are outlined in Section 4 below.

Sunscreen

Sunscreen that is SPF50 or 50+ broad-spectrum and water-resistant should be applied to all skin not covered by clothing. Good practice ensures that:

- sunscreen is available at training and events.
- sunscreen is stored below 30 degrees and kept in the shade.
- the expiry date is checked annually prior to the summer season of sport.
- everyone is encouraged to apply sunscreen (the equivalent of one teaspoon per limb for adults) 20 minutes before being outdoors and reapply every two hours (or more often if swimming or sweating).

Note: sunscreen does not completely block UV and should always be used with other forms of sun protection.

Leadership and education

School staff and coaches have a responsibility to model good sun protection as part of their duty of care to students and should ensure they:

- check and communicate the UV levels and sun protection times via the SunSmart Widget on the APS Sport website or the free SunSmart Global UV app.
- implement and promote sun protection measures to students and fellow staff.
- wear a sun-protective hat, SunSmart clothing and sunglasses.
- apply sunscreen.
- seek shade whenever possible.

Relevant documents / links

- [APS Sport Inclusion Framework](#)
- [APS Adverse Weather – Primary and Secondary](#)
- Australian Institute of Sports Position Statement: [Sun Safe Sports](#)
- Australian Sports Commission / Clearinghouse for Sport / VicSport
- [Good Vision for Life \(Optometry Australia\) – Sun safety / Sports vision](#)
- [Occupational Health and Safety Act \(2004\)](#)
- Department of Education and Training (Vic): [Sun and UV Protection](#) (Feb 2023)
- WorkSafe Victoria: [Sun protection](#)
- Safe Work Australia: [Guide on exposure to solar ultraviolet radiation \(UVR\)](#) (Dec 2019)

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4. Sport-specific guidance

This section outlines sport-specific uniform recommendations.

Athletics / Cross Country

Strong consideration should be given to replacing singlets and crop tops or singlets with short-sleeved t-shirts.

If race briefs, crop tops or singlets are permitted, skins are recommended when competing for extended periods.

Cricket

Wear loose fitting, long-sleeved shirts with collars for full arm protection and added neck protection when the collar is flipped up. A wide-brim or bucket hat is recommended for fielding. Cricket Victoria's [extreme heat guidelines](#) include sun protection guidance.

Football / Hockey / Soccer

Although football, hockey and soccer are normally played during low UV periods (May to mid-August), the extended times of training and play often means cumulative UV exposure which adds to skin cancer risk. Check UV levels and sun protection times for your location. Use sun protection measures when playing for extended periods outside. Also see Hockey Australia's [Extreme Weather Guidelines](#).

Netball

Netball Australia's [Uniform Guidelines](#) state that uniform options must cater for all weather conditions to ensure that players are protected from the sun and/or cold weather conditions. Players may choose a uniform style that covers additional body surfaces including the legs, arms and/or head.

Rowing

During training and regattas, rowers spend extended times exposed to direct and indirect (scattered and reflected) UV contributing to high UV exposure. Dosimetry results reported in a rowing study indicated that the UV exposure in a single race can be high enough to cause sunburn. Rowers should ensure that they:

- have their shoulders and upper arms covered (full length sleeves are preferred).
- wear caps and/or visors for on-water training and competition.
- apply sunscreen to the face, neck and ears not protected by the cap or visor.
- when possible, wear close-fitting, wrap-around sunglasses that meet the Australian Standard 1067 (Sunglasses: Category 2, 3 or 4) and cover as much of the eye area as possible.

Softball

[Softball Australia's Adverse Weather Policy](#) includes sun protection guidance. Officials, volunteers and players must ensure that when off-diamond, sun protection is addressed by wearing a wide brimmed hat and sunglasses.

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Swimming

UV comes directly from the open sky and is indirectly reflected from the water. UV can also penetrate water up to a depth of 50 centimetres. If swimming outdoors, wear a densely woven top or UPF50+ long-sleeved rashie and UV protective swimming goggles. Apply water-resistant sunscreen at least 20 minutes before going in the water and directly after coming out of the water. No sunscreen is completely waterproof, and reapplication will always be necessary. Cover up with clothing, a hat and sunglasses when out of the water.

Tennis

Sunglasses made specifically for tennis prevent slippage and offer better peripheral vision. Impact-resistant polycarbonate sunglasses are recommended.

Touch Football

Touch Football is normally played during the warmer weather, and players should wear touch football shirts that cover the chest, shoulders and upper arms, and skins under shorts.