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Law allows Alabama students to apply sunscreen at school

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A new law allows Alabama school students to apply personal sunscreen at school without the need for special permission from a doctor or parent. The law (Act 2017-278) includes both public and private schools and went into effect immediately.

According to Dr. Tom Miller, State Health Officer at the Alabama Department of Public Health, "Students will now be able to apply sunscreen to protect themselves from sunburn before going outside. We know that sunburn, particularly in childhood, increases your risk for skin cancer. Applying sunscreen before outside school activities will prevent overexposure to the sun's UVA and UVB rays, thus preventing many forms of skin cancer—including melanoma, the deadliest form of skin cancer."

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), application of sunscreen while outdoors is a simple step to protect yourself from the harm of overexposure to sunlight's UVA and UVB rays. A sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 30 or higher should be applied at least every two hours, especially after swimming or sweating. For parents with babies less than 6 months old, please follow directions on the sunscreen's package for its use.

Aside from sunscreen, other steps to protection from the sun's harmful UV rays include the following:

- Avoiding use of sunbathing and tanning beds
- Covering up with protective clothing and wide-brimmed hats
- Seeking shade, especially during midday hours (between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m.)

Previously, students were unable to use sunscreen unless prescribed by a physician. With the passage of this law, no rules of the State Board of Education or the Alabama Board of Nursing will apply to Food and Drug Administration-approved over-the-counter sunscreen.

Melanoma is the most commonly diagnosed cancer in the U.S. and is responsible for about 78 percent of all skin cancer deaths. Melanoma occurs when the pigment-producing cells that give color to the skin become cancerous. Cases of melanoma are 6 percent higher in Alabama than the national average. It is the most common type of skin cancer in children.

Alabama is among a growing number of states— like Arizona, California, New York, Oregon, Texas, Utah and Washington State—that lawfully permit students' use of sunscreen at school.

For more information about sun safety go to Skin Cancer (ADPH) ([../././cancer/skin.html](#)) or Skin Cancer (CDC) (<https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/skin>).

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