Choosing a SunSmart fabric

The type of fabric that the school uniform is made from is vitally important.

A general and simple rule for deciding a fabric's ability to provide a barrier to UVR is to hold the fabric up to the sun or a fluorescent light, and if you can see the light coming through, it will allow the sun's ultraviolet rays to penetrate. This test is only a guide, with the scientific measurement of fabric being the only true test of its protective factor.

Ultraviolet Protection Factor (UPF) ratings on clothing or fabrics can be used as a guide. There is an Australian Standard (AS/NZS 4399) which sets out the testing methods for assessing the UPF rating of fabrics. These tags indicate the protective category of the fabric according to the requirements of the Australian Standards. These categories are detailed below:

Protection Category	UPF Range	Rating	% UVR blocked
Excellent Protection	40 to 50, 50+	40, 45, 50, 50+	more than 97.5
Very Good Protection	25 to 39	25, 30, 35	96.0-97.4
Good Protection	15 to 24	15, 20	93.3-95.9

Ultraviolet Protection Factor (UPF) ratings for clothing.

Darker coloured fabrics are preferred over lighter coloured fabrics as they generally absorb more UVR, allowing less to penetrate the fabric. Light coloured fabric can reflect ultraviolet radiation on to unprotected skin.

Many schools have two or more colours in their uniforms, so it may be possible to plan future editions of the uniform in darker shades of the two colours.

Fabrics which are closely woven offer more protection than those less closely woven. Cotton and cotton/polyester fabrics are suitable. The weight of the fabric can also be a factor in determining the fabrics' sun protection qualities.

As students can spend so much time in the sun, the comfort of the clothing is an important factor. If the fabric holds perspiration against the skin, the body will not be able to cool itself by evaporating the perspiration.

Natural fibres are comfortable and allow evaporation to occur. They may also provide a higher UPF because the natural pigments act as UVR absorbers.

Australian made fabrics often have higher UPF ratings than their counterparts from overseas. Buying fabric with a high UPF is worth the slightly increased cost to ensure adequate protection for children.

SunSmart Checklist

Hats	Broad brim Bucket Legionnaire
Shirts	Collar ¾ length sleeves No V-neck
Shorts/skirts	Knee length Loose fitting
Shoes	Closed in
Sunglasses	Australian Standard 1067 Wrap around style
Sunscreen	SPF 30+ Broad spectrum Water resistant
Fabric	Tight weave Dark colour Natural fibre UPF 50+

Cancer Council 13 11 20

All photos courtesy of Queensland Health

For information and support call
Monday to Friday, 9am – 5pm

www.cancerqld.org.au

SunSmart uniforms

Clothing and hats for schools and early childhood settings

Slip Slop Slap Seek Slide

Cancer Council Queensland

SUNSMART®

Queensland has the highest rate of skin cancer in the world

It is well established that overexposure to Ultraviolet Radiation (UVR) from the sun during the first 18 years of life increases the risk of developing skin cancer later in life. Students can spend a lot of time exposed to the sun, while travelling to and from school, on lunch breaks, and participating in outdoor school based activities. In order to reduce their risk of developing skin cancer, it is important that they learn how to protect their skin from the sun. A SunSmart school uniform is an important part of this protection.

What is a SunSmart uniform?

It is important to try to minimise students' exposure to the sun. Shade from trees and built structures is great at reducing exposure; however, with kids being kids, it is not always possible to keep them out of the sun. Because shade is not always available, a sun safe uniform is important. Here are a few pointers on how to design and select a SunSmart uniform.

Shirts

- Loose fitting clothing is comfortable and cool.
- A collar is necessary to prevent burning of the neck.
- Avoid having a V-neck shirt. Use a zip or buttons instead and encourage students to button or zip the shirt up to the collar.
- ¾ length sleeves are great, but of course, full length sleeves are better.

Skirts and shorts

- Lengthen shorts and skirts to just above the knee. This will increase the amount of sun protection for the legs.
- Loose fitting shorts are comfortable and cool.
- Unisex shorts for sporting activities are a good idea.

Sunglasses

- Sunglasses prevent the formation of cataracts and other eye conditions later in life.

When choosing sunglasses look for:

- Compliance with Australian Standard 1067 - "Sunglasses – Non Prescriptive Type" Eye Protection Factor (EPF) 9 or10.
- Wrap around style to prevent sun from entering from any angle with shatter proof lenses.

Remember, cost does not relate to quality or sun safety factor. Select one style that will best suit all students.

Shoes

- Closed-in shoes will give better protection from the sun.
- Long socks may also be incorporated into the formal school uniform to increase sun protection.

Hats

Research indicates that a broad brim will reduce the amount of UVR reaching the face by 50 per cent.

Common sites of skin damage and skin cancer are the neck, ears, temples, lips, face and nose. These areas are constantly exposed to the elements and therefore, generally receive more UVR than other parts of the body. Hats should always be used in combination with other forms of sun protection practice.

Bike helmets do not provide any shade. Students should be encouraged to apply sunscreen before riding their bikes, or wear a hat with a peak at the front under the helmet. Bike helmet covers with a wide brim are now readily available from many retail outlets.

Factors to consider when choosing a hat for your school or early childhood setting.

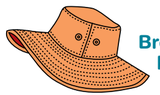
We encourage you to consult widely with students, staff and parents before introducing one of the three hat styles recommended by Cancer Council Queensland. Factors to consider include:

- Good sun protection.
- Fashion trends.
- Practicalities (for example, which hat is safe for sport).
- Cost.
- Safety.

Ventilation should also be a consideration if the hat is to be used during physical activity or warmer weather.

Which type of hat?

Cancer Council Queensland recommends all students and staff wear hats that provide good shade to the face, back of the neck and ears when outdoors.



Broad brimmed hat

Broad brimmed hats should have a brim of at least 7.5 centimetres wide. A broad brimmed hat that provides good shade can considerably reduce the exposure of UVR to the face. The brim width for children under 10 should be proportional to the size of the child's head, and ensure that their face is well shaded.

Legionnaire hat

Legionnaire style hats should have a flap that covers the neck and meets the sides of the front peak to provide protection to the side of the face. Baseball caps and sun visors are not recommended as they leave the ears and back of the neck exposed.

Bucket hat

Bucket or surfie style hats should have a deep crown and sit low on the head. The angled brim should be at least 6 centimetres and provide the face, neck and ears with plenty of protection from the sun. The brim width on bucket hats for pre-school aged children should be proportional to the size of the child's head, ensuring that their face is sufficiently shaded (minimum of 5 centimetres as a rough guide). Bucket hats may impede youngsters' peripheral vision, therefore safety aspects need to be taken into consideration.

Sunscreen is important, as your last line of defence against sun exposure.

An SPF 30+ broad spectrum water resistant sunscreen should always be used.

Sunscreen should be used in conjunction with natural protection (hats, clothing, sunglasses and shade). Sunscreens which are marked as being broad spectrum provide protection from both UVA and UVB rays. Sunscreen should always be reapplied every two hours or more if sweating or swimming. Ensure kids reapply before each lunch break and physical education class.

The Department of Education, Training and the Arts requires that all schools develop and implement a sun protection strategy (See HLS-PR-013; Sun Safety Strategy, Education Queensland). Development of a sun safe uniform policy should form part of your school's overall sun safety strategy. For assistance with policy writing visit Cancer Council Queensland's website www.cancerqld.org.au