

Vitality

SunSmart knows UV rays

Summer means beach fun, outdoor sports and soaking in the sun.

But many of us don't know the effects that ultraviolet rays, the deadly consequences of radioactive lights that peek through our rapidly depleting ozone layer, can have on kids.

Dr. Bernice Krafchik, head of dermatology at The Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto, urges parents to ensure extra precautions for the summer. Hats that cover ears, neck and face are most important, touching areas that are more exposed and susceptible to contracting cancerous diseases like melanoma.

"Sun damage occurs in childhood. (Contracting melanoma) is a culmination of the sun, which is why Australia has the largest incidence of it in the world," she says. "The incidence of melanoma in Ontario is one in 69, and that's not a good number."

That's why Torontonian Joanne Speight, owner of active wear and summer accessory SunSmart, created her UV protectant bathing gear. Speight, a former accountant, always wanted to provide her two small children with proper UV protection in addition to sunblock. She purchased a pricey UV protective bathing suit eight years ago and thought she could offer the same outfit but at a lesser cost.

With a little research and some sewing skills, she created a colourful, tight-knit cotton blend, scuba-style suit that's 97



COURTESY OF SUNSMART

Parents can worry less about their kids out in the sun. The SunSmart scuba-style suit protects kids from the sun's damaging UV rays.

per cent UV protectant. That's especially important for being in the water, which reflects harmful rays on children's skin.

"Even if they're wearing a T-shirt, kids still get burned on their shoulders and back," Speight says. "Ours is a four-way stretch and dries very quickly. Our baby clothing even has a zipper to peel off the suit so diaper changing is really easy."

She also added a patch of a popular cartoon or animated character that doubles as a sun indicator. When the sun gets stronger, the patch become richer

in colour, and when it's overcast outside, the image becomes dim.

Speight also offers caps, capes and swim-friendly diapers. She's not yet approved by the Canadian Dermatology Association (CDA), the Ottawa-based national not-for-profit medical specialty association. But CDA executive director Michelle Albagli says they're in the process of launching the sun protection education program, which will recognize sun-protective clothing.

For details, visit www.sunsmart-store.com or www.dermatology.ca

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