

# Fun in the Sun?

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It was a sunny afternoon. My classmates and I were walking back from the playground, when something caught my eye. My friend Jesse had a burning red sunburn on her neck. I scampered over to her in line.

"Hey, are you alright? You have a nasty sunburn." I said. "Really? Is it bad? I've never had one before." She panicked. I decided to tell her about sun safety, since I was just at the Dermatologist's office with my mom who was having her regular checkup. The friendly doctor sat down with me and explained:

"Sunburns are bad because they hurt, can permanently damage the skin, and can even cause skin cancer. While we love our sun in the Sunshine state, we must protect ourselves from ultraviolet radiation. Ultraviolet radiation is a form of energy traveling through space that is made up of two types of harmful rays: the long wave, UVA and short wave, UVB. Basically, UVA rays can age us, and UVB rays can burn us.

But, lots of good things happen from the sun too! For example, plants, fruits and vegetables grow, we get natural light, it warms us, and we can even make energy from the sun with solar pannels. This is great for our environment, and helps save our ozone layer which is a natural barrier to UV rays. The sun also gives us Vitamin D, keeping us healthy and strong. So you see, the sun isn't all bad,



IF you protect yourself. When you are in the sun, during the hottest hours of the day, between 10 am and 2 pm, it helps to use plenty of sunscreen, wear protective clothing like a hat, and especially to look for shade. Shade is everyone's best friend!"

"Maybe you're right," Jessie said. "I will bring sunscreen and my hat to recess, and tell my mom we should get regular Dermatologist checkups too. Now, if only our school had a sun shade to protect us in the playground. I definitely don't want another red sunburn-ouch!" We went to our classroom, and sat down. Suddenly, our teacher surprised us with a pop quiz on UVA and UVB rays. Jessie mouthed "Thanks!" to me with two big thumbs up.

My school, North Beach Elementary, has over a thousand children like Jessie. We desperately need a sun shade over our playground so we don't get sunburns, and so the equipment doesn't get hot and we don't burn ourselves. Shade is a valuable commodity in the sizzling Florida sun, and a key part of sun safety. Shade will help us stay cooler so we can play longer and get more exercise. With shade, teachers could take classes to the playground to read and study.

Every year our school holds a carnival called "Fun in the Sun" in our playground area. A shade structure will keep us cooler while having fun. Maybe then, we can re-name our carnival as "Fun in the SHADE!"