

PRESS RELEASE

Good-bye, winter! Berlin kids play safe in the sun First day-care centre certified for skin cancer prevention

Berlin, Februar 26, 2009. Just in time for spring, Germany's first day-care centre has been certified for its activities in a sun safety program aiming at skin cancer prevention in children. Today, Marion Caspers-Merk, Parliamentary State Secretary to the Federal Minister of Health, presented the Berlin day-care centre INA.KINDER.GARTEN at the Charité Campus Virchow-Klinikum with the "Sun Safe Day-Care Centre" certificate. The certification marks the beginning of the project „SunPass – Sun Safe Play for Kids“, which shall be first implemented throughout Berlin and later expanded to day-care centres all over Europe.

„Every sunburn in childhood increases the risk of developing any kind of skin cancer. We therefore need to start at early age to protect our children from too much UV radiation. Child day-care centres are an important place to introduce programs for skin cancer prevention“, said Marion Caspers-Merk during the presentation, stating her support for the SunPass project initiated by the European Skin Cancer Foundation (ESCF). The ESCF has developed a sun safety policy for the project in cooperation with the Charité - Universitätsmedizin Berlin.

The educational program of the sun safety policy includes training modules for staff, children and parents. Moreover, certified Sun Safe Day-Care Centres need to make sure that children are protected from direct sun exposure, using, for example, special sunscreens and suitable solar panels, or hats with a wide brim that cover head and neck. In order to ensure a constant quality in sun protection measures, certified day-care centres will be checked at regular interval whether they still meet the requirements.

Professor Eggert Stockfleth, head of the ESCF and the Skin Cancer Center Charité: "Particularly sunburns in childhood seriously damage the stem cells of the human skin, thus increasing the risk to develop malignant melanoma even years or decades later. Practicing sun protection is the most important measure of prevention. With our SunPass project we aim at increasing the skin cancer knowledge in the general population and at improving the efforts in children's sun protection."

One out of five Germans will develop skin cancer in the course of life. Estimations of the Skin Cancer Centre Charité suggest an annual incidence of about 250,000 cases of non-melanoma skin cancer and 18,000 new cases of melanoma each year. As UV radiation has been long proven to cause skin cancer, one of the major causes for the increase in these skin cancers is an ever more intensified sun exposure of the skin in the past decades. There is an urgent need to raise the public awareness of skin cancer and skin cancer prevention, because most cases of skin cancer are curable, if detected and treated at an early stage of the disease.

For further information, please also refer to www.escf-network.eu.

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