



This Summer

A Parent's Warning About Unsafe Materials in Children's Sunglasses



Why This Matters Now

Summer brings longer days, stronger UV exposure, and a surge in brightly coloured, low-cost children's sunglasses appearing in markets, holiday shops, and online listings. Many parents assume that any dark lens offers protection, but the truth is far more troubling. A significant portion of ultra-cheap children's sunglasses are made from materials that would never pass regulated safety testing. Some contain chemicals restricted in children's products; others fail to block UV light entirely. The result is a product that looks protective but can quietly harm a child's eyes and skin.



Toxic and Unregulated Frame Materials

One of the most serious risks lies in the plastics used to make the frames. Some low-cost sunglasses are made from PVC softened with phthalates, chemicals that migrate easily through skin contact or when a child chews the frame. These plasticisers are restricted in children's toys across the UK and EU, yet they still appear in unregulated imports. Even more concerning are frames moulded from mixed scrap plastics. These blends often come from industrial waste streams and can contain brominated flame retardants, lead residues, or cadmium-based pigments. Because the supply chain is opaque, there is no way for a parent to know what is inside the plastic their child is wearing on their face.

Cheap rubberised frames can also be problematic. When manufacturers use low-grade elastomers, they may contain polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, a group of chemicals linked to skin irritation and long-term health risks. These compounds are restricted in children's products, yet they continue to surface in novelty sunglasses sold without proper certification.

Lenses That Darken Vision but Not UV Exposure

The greatest misconception is that dark lenses automatically protect a child's eyes. In reality, the opposite can happen. Some low-quality sunglasses use darkened plastic with no UV-blocking properties at all. When a child wears these lenses, their pupils dilate because the world appears dimmer. Without UV protection, this dilation allows even more ultraviolet radiation to reach the retina. The damage is invisible in the moment but accumulates over time, increasing the risk of long-term eye conditions.

Beyond UV failure, some lenses are made from brittle acrylic that can shatter on impact. A fall, a thrown toy, or a collision on a playground can cause the lens to crack into sharp fragments. Even lenses made from low-grade polycarbonate can distort vision, causing headaches, eye strain, and poor depth perception—issues that are especially concerning for toddlers still developing spatial awareness.

Hidden Heavy Metals and Hazardous Colourants

The bright colours that attract children can hide another layer of risk. Some unregulated sunglasses use pigments containing lead or cadmium, both of which are banned in children's products but still appear in counterfeit or ultra-cheap imports. These metals can transfer through skin contact or from a child mouthing the frame. Metal trims and hinges may also contain nickel, a common allergen that can cause rashes and persistent dermatitis when worn against the skin in warm weather.

Mirror coatings and decorative finishes can be equally unsafe. In some cases, these coatings flake easily or contain heavy metals used to achieve reflective effects. Once the coating begins to degrade, children can inhale or ingest microscopic particles.

A group of children wearing colorful sunglasses and hats, smiling. The background is a soft-focus image of several children, some wearing hats and sunglasses, creating a bright and cheerful atmosphere.

Adhesives and Surface Treatments That Don't Belong Near a Child's Skin

Even when the frame and lenses appear safe, the adhesives and coatings may not be. Some low-cost sunglasses use glues that release formaldehyde, a known irritant that can cause redness and discomfort around the nose and temples. Anti-fog and anti-scratch coatings may rely on PFAS-based chemicals or solvent blends not intended for prolonged skin contact. These substances are rarely disclosed, and in unregulated products, they are almost never tested.

Why Parents Need to Be Vigilant

The danger of unsafe sunglasses is that they masquerade as protective gear. A child wearing dark lenses appears shielded from the sun, yet the materials may be exposing them to toxic chemicals while allowing UV radiation to reach their eyes unchecked. The combination of chemical exposure, optical distortion, and inadequate UV protection makes some low-cost sunglasses more harmful than wearing no sunglasses at all.

This summer, parents should treat children's sunglasses as safety equipment, not fashion accessories. Products should clearly state UV400 or 100% UVA/UVB protection, carry CE or UKCA markings, and come from reputable brands with transparent material information. Anything that smells strongly of chemicals, feels sticky, flakes, or lacks certification should be avoided entirely.

SAFE vs UNSAFE MATERIALS

CHILDREN'S SUNGLASSES CHECK BOX

UNSAFE MATERIALS

Frames made from **PVC** or **soft PVC**, often softened with phthalates that can migrate through skin contact or mouthing.

Unlabelled or **mixed scrap plastics** containing unknown additives, flame retardants, or heavy-metal pigments.

Low-grade **rubber or soft-touch plastics** that may contain restricted PAHs.

Dark **acrylic lenses** that shatter easily and offer no UV protection.

Lenses that are tinted but **not marked UV400** or 100% UVA/UVB, allowing more UV into the eye.

Bright or neon colours using **lead- or cadmium-based pigments**.

Mirror coatings that **flake**, degrade, or contain heavy metals.

Metal trims or hinges containing **nickel**, a common allergen.

Adhesives with a strong chemical smell, sometimes releasing **formaldehyde** or other irritants.

SAFE MATERIALS

Frames made from **TPEE, TPE, TR90, or food-grade rubber**, all flexible, durable, and non-toxic.

Lenses made from **polycarbonate**, which is impact-resistant and naturally UV-blocking when properly manufactured.

Clear, printed **UV400** or **100% UVA/UVB** protection on the product or packaging.

Even, stable colours that do not rub off when lightly scratched.

Mirror coatings that are smooth, bonded, and free from peeling.

Nickel-free hinges or trims designed for sensitive skin.

Visible **CE** or **UKCA** marking indicating basic safety compliance.

Frames and lenses with **no chemical smell**, no stickiness, and no flaking surfaces.





CHILDREN'S SUNGLASSES

VISUAL SAFETY CHECKLIST

A quick guide for parents this summer



1. Frame Safety — What You Should See

Look for frames labelled **TPEE**, **TPE**, **TR90**, or **food-grade rubber**.

These materials bend safely, contain no restricted chemicals, and are designed for children's skin contact.

The surface should feel smooth, clean, and dry — never sticky, oily, or rubbery.

2. Frame Safety — What You Should Avoid

Avoid frames made from **PVC**, **soft PVC**, or **unlabelled plastic**.

These may contain phthalates, flame retardants, or heavy-metal pigments.

If the frame has a strong chemical smell or the colour rubs off when scratched, treat it as unsafe.

3. Lens Safety — What You Should See

Safe lenses are made from **polycarbonate** and clearly marked **UV400** or **100% UVA/UVB**.

The lens should look clean and even, with no waves, distortions, or cloudy patches.

When held up to the light, the tint should appear uniform across the whole surface.

4. Lens Safety — What You Should Avoid

Avoid lenses that are dark but **not labelled UV400**.

These lenses dilate the pupil and increase UV exposure.

Avoid brittle acrylic lenses that feel thin, rigid, or plasticky — these can shatter on impact.



5. Colour & Coating Safety — What You Should See

Colours should be even, matte or satin, and firmly bonded to the frame.

Mirror coatings should be smooth, with no flaking, peeling, or rough edges.

Hinges and trims should be nickel-free or clearly labelled as hypoallergenic.

6. Colour & Coating Safety — What You Should Avoid

Avoid neon or metallic colours with no safety information — these may contain lead or cadmium.

Avoid mirror coatings that scratch easily or leave residue on your fingers.

Avoid metal trims that cause redness behind the ears or on the nose bridge.

7. Certification — The Fastest Safety Indicator

Look for **CE** or **UKCA** marking on the inside arm or packaging.
Look for a clear statement of **UV400** or **100% UVA/UVB** protection.
Look for the material name — safe brands always disclose it.

If none of this information is present, the sunglasses are not suitable for children.

8. The One-Minute Parent Test

Hold the sunglasses.
Smell them.
Scratch the colour lightly.
Check for UV400.
Check for CE or UKCA.
If anything feels off, choose another pair.





Children's Sun Cream

What Parents Need to Know This Summer



Just as with children's sunglasses, parents often assume that any sun cream labelled "kids" or "baby" is automatically safe. But many low-cost or unregulated products contain ingredients that can irritate young skin or fail to provide adequate UV protection.



Chemical Filters That Can Irritate

Some cheaper sun creams use older UV filters such as oxybenzone, octinoxate, or octocrylene. These can cause stinging, rashes, or allergic reactions — especially around the eyes, cheeks, and neck. Products sold through unregulated online marketplaces may contain undisclosed concentrations or outdated formulations that break down quickly in sunlight.

Counterfeit and Fake Sun Creams

A growing number of counterfeit sun-care products mimic well-known brands but contain:

- no effective UV filters
- industrial-grade fragrance oils
- banned preservatives
- unstable formulas that separate in heat

These products leave children effectively unprotected.

Fragrance and Preservative Sensitisers

Children’s skin is especially reactive to:

- MI/MCI (methylisothiazolinone)
- strong synthetic fragrances
- essential oils marketed as “natural” but photoreactive in sunlight

A safe children’s sun cream should be fragrance-free and MI/MCI-free.

Mineral vs Chemical Filters

Mineral filters like zinc oxide and titanium dioxide are often better tolerated by babies and toddlers. They sit on the skin rather than absorbing into it and provide stable, broad-spectrum protection. Spray formats should be avoided because children can inhale the particles.

The One-Minute Sun Cream Test

Parents can use this quick check before applying any product:

- SPF 30 or higher
- Broad-spectrum UVA/UVB
- Fragrance-free
- Clear ingredient list
- Purchased from a trusted retailer

If any of these are missing, choose another product.



SAFE vs UNSAFE INGREDIENTS

CHILDREN'S SUN CREAM CHECK BOX

UNSAFE INGREDIENTS & FORMULATIONS

Sun creams containing **oxybenzone, octinoxate, or octocrylene**, older chemical UV filters linked to irritation and allergic reactions in children.

Products with **MI/MCI (methylisothiazolinone)** or strong synthetic fragrances, both common causes of dermatitis on young skin.

Unregulated or **counterfeit sun creams** that mimic trusted brands but contain no effective UV filters, banned preservatives, or unstable formulas that separate in heat.

Spray formats that release **inhalable particles**, especially unsafe for babies and toddlers.

Creams labelled “kids” or “baby” with **no ingredient list**, no UVA/UVB information, or vague claims such as “gentle” or “dermatologist tested.”

Essential-oil blends marketed as “natural” but **photoreactive in sunlight**, increasing the risk of rashes.

Products purchased from **unknown online sellers** with no batch number, no expiry date, and no brand accountability.

SAFE INGREDIENTS & FORMULATIONS

Sun creams labelled **SPF 30 or higher** with clear **broad-spectrum UVA/UVB** protection.

Fragrance-free, **MI/MCI-free** formulations designed for sensitive skin.

Mineral-based creams using **zinc oxide** or **titanium dioxide**, which sit on the skin and provide stable, child-friendly protection.

Creams from **recognised pharmacy brands** with full ingredient disclosure, batch numbers, and expiry dates.

Thick, even formulations that **do not separate**, pill, or leave chemical odours on the skin.

Products packaged with **clear usage instructions**, including reapplication guidance and age suitability.

Sun creams stored and sold by **trusted retailers**, ensuring proper temperature control and authenticity.

CHILDREN'S SUN CREAM

VISUAL SAFETY CHECKLIST

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SUN CREAM — WHAT TO LOOK FOR

1. What Safe Sun Cream Should Look Like

SPF 30 or higher with **broad-spectrum UVA/UVB** clearly stated.
A full ingredient list — nothing hidden, nothing vague.
A smooth, even texture with no separation or chemical odour.

2. What Safe Sun Cream Should Avoid

Products with no ingredient list or no UVA/UVB information.
Strong fragrances, essential-oil blends, or known irritants.
Sprays that release fine particles children can inhale.

3. Skin-Friendly Formulations to Look For

Fragrance-free and **MI/MCI-free** creams for sensitive skin.
Mineral-based formulas with **zinc oxide** or **titanium dioxide**.
Trusted pharmacy brands with batch numbers and expiry dates.

4. High-Risk Ingredients to Avoid

Older chemical filters like **oxybenzone**, **octinoxate**, and **octocrylene**.
Counterfeit products with no effective UV filters.
Creams that sting, redden, or smell synthetic.

5. Certification & Authenticity Checks

Clear branding, batch numbers, and expiry dates.
Products sold by reputable retailers with proper storage.
Packaging that is consistent, correctly printed, and not poor-quality.

6. The One-Minute Parent Test

Check the SPF.
Check UVA/UVB.
Check the ingredients.
Check the smell.
Check the retailer.
If anything feels off, choose another product Loveitstitchitkeepit.com



Don't Dump it, Swap it

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