



Fashion

The Shocking Beauty Product Kids Aren't Allowed to Bring to School

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Four years ago, Holly Thaggard, the founder of sun-care brand Supergoop, received a note from her six-year-old daughter's school instructing parents to liberally apply sunscreen to their child on the day of an upcoming field trip. Great advice, right? The note went on to explain that any sunscreen found in children's bags would be thrown away. Wait. What? It turns out that sunscreen is widely prohibited at schools due to its FDA classification as an over-the-counter drug. "I was shocked," says Thaggard, "and given what I do and what Supergoop stands for, I needed to know more. I came to learn that 47 out of 50 states restrict the use of sunscreen in schools."

Let's think about that for just a second. "We know that skin-cancer risk—as well as photoaging—is determined by cumulative UV exposure," says Rebecca Kazin, a dermatologist in Chevy Chase, Maryland, with three young children of her own. "It's best to limit one's cumulative exposure starting at a young age." But the very thing that can protect exposed skin (sunscreen) is restricted in the place where kids spend a big bulk of their day (school). "It was clear to me that there was a need to raise awareness around sun safety," says Thaggard.

So Thaggard teamed up with tennis star Maria Sharapova to launch Project Black Dot, which helps parents permit (via an easy form on projectblackdot.org) their kids to bring sunscreen to school—and apply it openly. "We want to stop the damage where it starts: childhood," says Thaggard. "Children are exposed to about three times more UV rays than adults, which makes sense, as they're on playgrounds and practice fields. Yet these laws don't allow for the most simple form of protection."

Sharapova was a natural partner for the project: Her constant exposure to the sun is something of an occupational necessity. "I've applied sunscreen diligently [before] playing tennis since I was a child," she says. "When I joined the Supergoop team [Sharapova is now a co-owner], I learned from Holly that sunscreen isn't allowed at public schools in most states without a permission slip. This was so shocking to me, particularly because the importance of using sunscreen was so ingrained in me during my time at the tennis academy."

So how does it work? "A parent simply needs to visit projectblackdot.org to sign their child's permission slip. You can sign right on your desktop, phone, or tablet, and we'll email you a PDF of the slip to either download and present to the school, or if your school allows email, you can simply attach the form and send it along. We want to get the chatter going amongst parents and in schools," Thaggard says. "The more permission slips that are signed and presented to school administrators, the better chance we have to change the thinking behind these regulations."

"It's difficult to make a sweeping rule for everybody," says Kazin. "There will be the one kid who eats the sunscreen. But this is a step in the right direction."