



Your Future's so Bright, You Have to Wear Shades!

Most people are aware of the need to protect their skin from harmful damage caused by the sun's ultraviolet (UV) rays. However, you may not be as aware of the damage the sun can do to your eyes. Both UV rays and blue light rays can cause damage to your eyes. While the harmful effects of these rays are three times greater in the summer than in the winter, you still run a high risk of sustaining serious eye damage if you do not wear eye protection in the winter months. UV and blue light rays can also damage your eyes on overcast and cloudy days.

Exposure to these harmful rays without eye protection can lead to:

- Cataracts
- Age-related macular degeneration
- Pterygia – tissue growths on the whites of the eyes
- Skin cancer near the eyes
- Photokeratitis – sunburn of the cornea

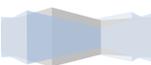
Unlike other parts of your body, your eye's lens does not repair itself when damaged. Cells and proteins that get damaged will never be replaced, and over time, the damage to your lens may lead to serious eye diseases or possible loss of vision.

While all people are at risk of eye damage from prolonged exposure to the sun, several groups face an increased risk. In particular, children under the age of 10 may sustain serious retinal damage from sun exposure. Their eyes are not able to block as much UV radiation as adult eyes can. As a result, it is extremely important that young children wear eye protection at all times when outside in the sun.

Other groups of people at an above-average risk of eye damage from the sun include:

- People with retinal disorders
- Cataract surgery patients
- People taking medications that increase eye sensitivity to sunlight
- People with lighter-pigmented eyes

When your eyes begin to tear or squint due to bright outdoor light, your eyes are creating a natural defense against UV rays, which are harmful and can affect the eyes. Even if you wear sunglasses on every sunny day, you still may not be doing enough to protect your eyes from those dangerous rays. After years of going unprotected, your eyes will eventually break down and disease may be inevitable. In order to prevent diseases from affecting your eyes, you must wear sunglasses that are at least UV400, and keep your eyes shaded as much as possible.



Eye damage from the sun is cumulative over the course of your life. The more you are exposed to sunlight, the more likely you are to suffer permanent damage to your eyes. Therefore, it is important to always wear eye protection whenever you are outside during the day. Studies have shown that UV rays are strongest between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., so it is especially important to protect your eyes during these hours.

The best way to protect your eyes is to wear sunglasses. However, not all sunglasses will provide you with equal protection from UV and blue light rays. For maximum protection, you should look for sunglasses that:

- Block 99-100% of UVA and UVB rays
- Block blue light rays
- Contain large lenses that fit close to your eyes

The most important step to protect your eyes from sun damage is to wear the proper sunglasses whenever you are in the sun. If you are unable to wear sunglasses, wear a hat with a wide brim that covers your entire face. If you have suffered sunburn on your eyelids, place a cold compress over your eyes for 15 minutes every hour until the burning has subsided, then place a coating of aloe over the eyelids. Protecting your eyes now will help you continue to see how bright your future will be.

For more information on sun damage to your eyes, contact Sharon Rateike, corporate wellness program coordinator at (920) 568-5475 or Sharon.Rateike@forthc.com.

