

Safety Flash

During the summer there is usually a lot of emphasis on protecting skin from UV rays during the summer. But one must not forget about protecting the eyes—the most exposure to bright sunlight increases the risk of developing cataracts, macular degeneration, and growths on the eye including cancer. July is UV safety awareness month. However, eyes are at risk to UV rays all year round. Sunlight is not the only culprit though—tanning beds offer a higher dose of UV rays than sunlight. This makes it important to protect the eyes from UV rays in all situations by wearing proper eye protection—either UV blocking sunglasses or appropriate tanning goggles.

Here are some tips from the American Academy of Ophthalmology:

- Don't focus on color or darkness of sunglass lenses: Select sunglasses that block UV rays. Don't be deceived by color or cost. The ability to block UV light is not dependent on the price tag or how dark the sunglass lenses are.
- Check for 100 percent UV protection: Make sure your sunglasses block 100 percent of UV-A rays and UV-B rays.
- Choose wrap-around styles: Ideally, your sunglasses should wrap all the way around to your temples, so the sun's rays can't enter from the side.
- Wear a hat: In addition to your sunglasses, wear a broad-brimmed hat to protect your eyes.
- Don't rely on contact lenses: Even if you wear contact lenses with UV protection, remember your sunglasses.
- Don't be fooled by clouds: The sun's rays can pass through haze and thin clouds. Sun damage to eyes can occur anytime during the year, not just in the summertime.
- Protect your eyes during peak sun times: Sunglasses should be worn whenever outside, and it's especially important to wear sunglasses in the early afternoon and at higher altitudes, where UV light is more intense.
- Never look directly at the sun. Looking directly at the sun at any time, including during an eclipse, can lead to solar retinopathy, damage to the eye's retina from solar radiation.
- Don't forget the kids: Everyone is at risk, including children.
- Protect their eyes with hats and sunglasses. In addition, try to keep children out of the sun between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m., when the sun's UV rays are the strongest.

Wyatt Safety, Health & Environment Department

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