



"Do You See What I See?"

We all welcome the summer sun and some days we can't seem to get enough. Many people remember to put on their sun block to protect their skin from the damaging effects of the sun but we do not always remember to do the same protection for our eyes.

Sunburn in your earlier years can put you at risk for developing skin cancer later in life. Sun damage to the eyes can also take years before the effects are felt. Some effects may be short term too. Photokeratitis and photoconjunctivitis is an inflammation of the membrane that lines the outside of the eye. After a long day of summer sun it can cause your eyes to feel tired, sore and gritty, all indicating UV (ultra violet) over exposure.

Sun exposure can also increase your risk of cataracts and age-related macular degeneration (AMD). It is estimated that 16 million people developed cataracts due to sun exposure. Cataracts are one of the leading causes of blindness around the world and AMD is on of the most common causes of blindness in this country.

Direct sunlight can be very damaging to the eyes but the UV rays that reflect off of sand, water, concrete and snow can be even more dangerous. Grass, soil and water reflect less than 10% of UV radiation where as fresh snow reflects as much as 80%. This affects the amount of UVR (ultra violet radiation) your eyes receive because when you look down your eyes receive direct reflection of the rays.

The time of day also affects your exposure to UVR. At noon UVR is as much as ten times higher than being outside around 3pm. Higher altitudes absorb fewer UV rays so when you are visiting or skiing in high altitude regions you are more at risk for UV exposure. Even flying through high altitude regions (if you are sitting near a window) can put you at risk for high UV exposure.

It is important to also protect the eyes of children. Some researchers estimate that we receive 80% of our lifetime exposure to UVR by the age of 18. A child's eyes will also transmit more UVR rays to the retina than an adult. This will increase their risk of eye damage later in life.

So how do you protect your eyes from UVR? Sunglasses are helpful but not all of them are capable of blocking the harmful UVR. Try to find sunglasses that transmit no more than 1% of UVB and UVA (these are two of the main rays transmitted from the sun).

Also, look for lenses that are large enough to cover the eye completely. Wrap around lenses are the best. Grey lenses also provided the greatest protection. Also opt for darker lenses to increase absorption of UVR especially if you spend a lot of time outside.

If you wear contact lenses check to see if they have UVR protection. The benefit of contact lenses with UVR protection is that they protect the whole eye whereas most sunglasses allow UV rays to enter the sides. Even modern-day intraocular lens implants that correct vision after cataract surgery have UVR blocking benefits.

So put on your sunglasses along with sun block and a brimmed hat and enjoy all that summer has to offer.

Source: "The Sun & Your Eyes: What You Need to Know", National Women's Health Resource Center, www.healthywomen.org.

Heavenly Father, You created the sun and the moon and all the natural beauties of the earth. Help me to enjoy Your creation and also respect the gift of my eyesight. Assist me with seeing the miracles all around me on the days when my life seems burdened and routine. Awaken my spirit with the beauty of the sunrise and help me to feel inner peace with the setting of the sun. We ask this in Your name, amen.

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Blood Drive
Wednesday, August 6
2 - 7 PM
Room #210

Blood Pressure Screening:
Sat., July 19 6:00 PM

Office Hours:
Wednesdays: 1-3 p.m.