



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF JUVENILE JUSTICE
OFFICE OF HEALTH SERVICES

EMPLOYEE HEALTH UPDATE: UV SAFETY MONTH



See the Light; Protect Your Eyes This Summer

July is UV Safety Month and the American Academy of Ophthalmology reminds Americans of the importance of protecting their eyes from the sun's harmful rays by wearing sunglasses and wide-brimmed hats. One of the greatest threats to your eyes is invisible. The scientific evidence is piling up: long-term exposure to invisible ultraviolet radiation can damage our eyes and lead to vision loss. Everyone is at risk, even children.

Like your skin, your eyes never recover from UV exposure. Studies show that exposure to bright sunlight may increase the risk of developing cataracts and age-related macular degeneration, both leading causes of vision loss among older adults. UV exposure, wind, and dust can also cause pterygia, benign growths on the eye's surface. The more exposure to bright light, the greater the chance of developing these eye conditions.

In addition to the damage caused by a lifetime of exposure to bright sun, you need to protect your eyes from acute damage caused by outings on very bright days. Excessive exposure to ultraviolet light reflected off sand, snow, water, or pavement can damage the cornea, the eye's surface. "Sun damage to eyes can occur anytime during the year, not just in the summertime," said Richard Bensinger, MD, a comprehensive ophthalmologist in Seattle, Wash. "Although July is designated as UV Safety Month, you should protect your eyes from damage all year long."

Similar to sunburn on your skin, corneal ultraviolet injuries are painful, but usually heal quickly.

TAKE THESE STEPS TO PROTECT YOUR EYES FROM THE SUN:

- Select sunglasses that block ultraviolet rays.**
 - Do not be deceived by color or cost. The ability to block UV light is not dependent on the darkness of the lens or the price tag.
- Make sure your sunglasses block 99 percent or 100 percent of UV rays and UV-B rays.**
- Ideally, your sunglasses should wrap all the way around to your temples, so the sun's rays cannot enter from the side.**
- In addition to your sunglasses, wear a broad-rimmed hat to protect your eyes.**
 - Do not be fooled by a cloudy day. The sun's rays can pass through the haze and thin clouds.
- Even if you wear contacts with UV protection, remember your sunglasses.**
- Sunglasses should be worn whenever outside. It is especially important to wear sunglasses in the early afternoon and in higher altitudes, where UV light is more intense.**