

Sunlight and Your Eyes: Protection for Every Season

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It is just as important to protect your eyes from the sun's harmful rays as it is to use sunscreen everyday to protect your skin. UV rays are present year-round even on cloudy days. There are 3 types of UV radiation: UVA, UVB and UVC. UVC is the most damaging but it is absorbed by the earth's atmosphere. Exposure to UVB causes photokeratitis which like a sunburn of the cornea. It is more intense at high altitudes especially during skiing/snowboarding or from use of tanning machines. 85% of the sun rays can be reflected off snow, water and white sand; it is important to use skin and eye protection anytime you spend a significant amount of time outdoors. It is also closely linked to the development of cataracts which is the leading cause of reduced vision in people over 60, macular degeneration, benign growths of the conjunctiva and eyelid cancers. Early warning signs of eyelid cancers are –

- A lump or bump that bleeds or does not disappear
- New flat or pigmented lesions with irregular borders and growth
- Persistent red eye or inflammation of the lids that does not respond to medication
- Unexplained loss of eyelashes

It may take years before you experience the sun's damaging effect. 80% of your lifetime exposure to UV radiation occurs before the age of 18.

Protection - Children have larger pupils, which allow more light into the eyes and are outside more frequently and longer than adults. It is important to protect children's eyes with the appropriate eyewear. We are all susceptible to ocular damage from the sun but the fairer your skin, the lighter your eyes the higher your long-term risk of sun damage.

Lenses that absorb and block UV are one of the strongest defenses against ocular damage from the sun. Wear sunglasses (prescription or non-prescription) year-round even on overcast days. The glasses should clearly state the ability to block 99 to 100 percent of UVA and UVB, and be large enough size to shield the eye, eyelids and surrounding areas. Wraparound styles are best. Polarized lenses eliminate glare especially when driving, during snow activities or on the water where reflection increases glare. Glare can lead to fatigue, headaches and migraines. UV absorption is incorporated in most optical materials including prescription glasses, some contact lenses and intraocular lens implants.

Other defenses are use of a wide brim hat although this offers no protection from UV rays reflected surfaces like sand, water and pavements. Use sunscreen on the face and reduce sun exposure between 10am and 4pm.

Have annual eye examinations and ask your eye care professional about sight enhancing and vision protecting lens treatment options.

Call **Armonk Vision Care 914 273 4264** to schedule an examination or for any questions about lens options, sunglasses for adults and children.