

Live Well, Work Well

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What You Should Know About Sunglasses and UV Protection

While spending time in the sun offers health benefits and may be part of your daily routine, you have to be careful to protect yourself from its ultraviolet (UV) rays. UV rays not only cause sunburn, but they can also damage your eyes and hurt your vision. This article provides more information about how the sun can hurt your eyes, when you should be wearing sunglasses and what you should look for when buying a pair.

The Risks of UV Radiation

There are two types of UV radiation you should be aware of when it comes to protecting your eyes: UVA rays and UVB rays. According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), UVB rays are more likely to cause sunburn, but UVA rays penetrate deeper. However, exposure to either can damage your eyes. There are many medical issues that can arise from long-term exposure to UV rays. Wearing sunglasses can help prevent the following:

- **Photokeratitis**—Sunburn of the eye
- **Cataracts**—A disease that causes the lenses in the eyes to be cloudy and blurs vision
- **Macular degeneration**—The loss of central vision caused by the breakdown of the macula
- **Pterygium**—A growth that can form as a result of UV rays and dust and particles accumulating on the white part of your eye
- **Skin cancer**—Cancer that develops on the sensitive skin around the eyes

While all of these diseases sound unpleasant, the good news is you can take meaningful action to help prevent them by properly wearing the correct sunglasses.

When to Wear Sunglasses

Much like sunscreen, you should always have your sunglasses nearby. UV rays are at their peak from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., so it's especially important to wear your shades if you plan on being in the sun during those hours. You should also be aware that even on cloudy days when you cannot see the sun, UV rays are still present and can cause damage if you do not take preventive measures. A useful practice is to take your sunglasses everywhere you would take your cellphone or wallet.

What to Look for in Sunglasses

When it comes to sunglasses, not all are created equal. It is important to find a pair that contains the key components that will actually provide the protection you need. Here are some considerations when shopping for sunglasses:

- **Make sure the sunglasses have a sticker or tag promoting their UV-blocking capabilities.** According to the EPA, sunglasses with 99% to 100% UVA and UVB protection will greatly reduce eye damage from sun exposure.
- **Search for a pair with larger lenses and a wraparound style.** These will not only protect your eyes but also provide more coverage for the delicate skin around the eyes.
- **Pay attention to the darkness level of the lenses.** You should try to find a pair with the same level of darkness throughout the lens. However, if a pair has a gradient effect, make sure the darkest part is at the top of the lens, and the transition to the lighter part is slow.

It is important to remember that just because a pair of sunglasses covers your eyes, it does not mean it is providing protection. Effective options aren't always the most expensive, but it is important to find the right pair. Be diligent when shopping for sunglasses to ensure you are best protecting your eyes.

Takeaway

The sun's UV rays can cause damage to your eyes if you do not take precautions. Wearing sunglasses and making sure the sunglasses you choose are actually protective are important to ensure good eye health.

For more information on sun exposure and general wellness content, contact us today at Weadock and Associates, LLC.

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