



SUN AWARENESS

Protecting your eyes from ultraviolet (UV) radiation is just as important as putting on sunscreen to protect your skin. Many age-related eye diseases may be partially caused by UV exposure throughout your life. Infants and young children are especially vulnerable to UV radiation.

CAUSE

We may not be able to see UV light, but it is absorbed by the tissue of the eye and can cause serious eye damage. Because exposure to UV is cumulative, direct contact with sunlight for even short periods of time can cause several long-term eye health problems. Conditions such as cataracts, macular degeneration, photokeratitis (sunburn of the cornea), pingueculae (small yellowish bumps on the white of the eye) and pterygium (opaque growth over the surface of the cornea) are directly related to UV exposure. Children are at greater risk because they spend more time outdoors than the average adult and the crystalline lens in their eyes has less capability to filter UV.

DIAGNOSIS

Short-term effects of UV exposure can result in a condition known as keratitis, which is like having a sunburn on the eye. Symptoms include pain, redness and blurred vision. Keratitis is treated with artificial tears and usually takes 24 to 72 hours to resolve. Many long-term problems caused by UV exposure, such as cataracts, macular degeneration and melanomas are initially symptom free. These eye diseases only show symptoms when the condition is advanced and difficult, or even impossible, to treat. A comprehensive eye exam by an optometrist not only ensures optimal vision and eye health, but peace of mind.

PREVENTION

Your optometrist can make specific recommendations to ensure your eyes are well-protected from the harmful effects of UV radiation. Clear, UV-blocking coatings are available for all lenses. But, if you want protection from UV rays as well as comfort from glare and brightness, tinted glasses work best. Options include permanently tinted sunglasses or photochromic lenses, which get darker with increased UV intensity but offer UV protection even when clear. You can also use clip-on sunglass lenses that attach to your regular glasses, or large sunglasses that fit over your regular glasses, to block UV light. Tinted lenses do not necessarily block UV light, so it is important to ensure your lenses provide 100% UVA and UVB protection. You can even get contact lenses with UV protection. In addition to UV-blocking lenses, wearing a wide-brimmed hat or baseball cap also provides further protection.

SASKATCHEWAN ASSOCIATION OF OPTOMETRISTS

102-202 Wellman Crescent | Saskatoon, SK | S7T 0J1

Phone: 306.652.2069 | Toll-free: 1.877.660.3937