

# Eye Health

## Too Much Sun Can Be Dangerous For Eyes

(NAPSA)—While many people are concerned about effects of the sun on their skin, experts say they shouldn't lose sight of what the sun can do to their eyes.

If the eyes are exposed to excessive amounts of UV radiation over a short period of time, a "sunburn" called photokeratitis can occur.

This condition may be painful and includes symptoms such as red eyes, a foreign-body sensation or gritty feeling in the eyes, extreme sensitivity to light, and excessive tearing. Photokeratitis is usually temporary and rarely causes permanent damage.

### Premature Aging and More

Ongoing exposure to UV radiation, however, can cause serious harm to the eyes and age them prematurely. Research has shown that exposure to small amounts of UV radiation over time increases the chance of developing cataracts, macular degeneration—the leading cause of blindness in adults—and eye cancer. Long-term exposure may also cause damage to the retina, a nerve-rich lining of the eye that is used for seeing.

### Steps You Can Take

Whether it's cloudy or sunny, summer or winter, the American Optometric Association (AOA) urges Americans to take measures to protect their eyes from the sun's ultraviolet rays in order to decrease the risk of eye diseases and disorders.

A good rule of thumb to follow is to wear sunglasses or contact lenses that offer appropriate UV protection, apply UV-blocking sunscreen around the eye area and



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wear a hat to help protect the eyes and prevent premature aging.

To provide adequate protection for the eyes, the AOA recommends sunglasses and protective contact lenses that:

- Block out 99 to 100 percent of both UV-A and UV-B radiation
- Screen out 75 to 90 percent of visible light
- Are perfectly matched in color, free of distortion and imperfection and have lenses that are gray for proper color recognition.

The AOA also urges parents to remember to protect infants' and children's eyes from the sun at all times.

### Regular Exams Are Key

A good way to monitor eye health, maintain good vision and keep up-to-date on the latest in UV protection is by scheduling yearly comprehensive eye exams with an eye doctor.

To find an optometrist or for additional information on UV protection, visit [www.AOA.org](http://www.AOA.org).