

Health Tips - Eye Protection

Protect Your Eyes From The Summer Sun

(NAPSA)—Setting your sights on fun in the sun this summer? Don't forget eye protection, health experts advise.

The same ultraviolet (UV) sun rays that age and damage your skin can also hurt your eyes. UV radiation is especially intense in the summertime. Here are some of the ways UV rays can damage your eyes:

- **Burns:** Overexposure to UV light—as little as one day at the beach without proper eye protection—can cause a temporary but painful burn to the cornea, the surface of the eye.

- **Pterygium:** This abnormal but usually non-cancerous growth on the corner of the eye appears near the nose. It can grow over the cornea, partially blocking vision, and sometimes requires surgery to remove.

- **Cancer:** Repeated overexposure to UV rays can cause cancer of the eyelids and surrounding skin.

- **Cataracts:** Exposure to UV radiation over several years may lead to a clouding of the eye's lens, requiring surgery to correct.

- **Macular degeneration:** Some studies suggest that repeated exposure to UV radiation can contribute to the development of this eye disease, which affects the central part of the retina. It is the major cause of blindness among Americans over the age of 55.

- **Melanoma:** Next to the skin, the eyes are where melanoma most often develops.

Fortunately, these health conditions are avoidable. Before heading to the beach or the ball-field this summer, heed these hints from Ron Tiarks, who oversees 1,300 Vision Centers at Wal-Mart stores and SAM'S CLUBS nationwide:

- Wear sunglasses that block at least 99 percent of the sun's UV rays. "Check the label before you



Keep your eye on summer safety: A few minutes of careful shopping for sunglasses can ensure a safer vacation and help prevent serious eye problems.

buy," says Tiarks. "All sunglasses are not the same. A good pair is one of the best ways to protect your eyes in the summer sun." All sunglasses sold at Wal-Mart provide 99 percent UV protection and exceed UV blocking requirements set by the American National Standards Institute.

- Don't be fooled by tint or price. Darkly colored lenses don't necessarily provide the best UV protection—and the most expensive sunglasses are not always the best. It's the chemical coating applied to the lens, not how darkly the lens is tinted, that makes the difference. You can get a great look and great eye protection at a very reasonable price.

- Minimize midday sun exposure (10 a.m. to 4 p.m.).

- Wear a hat to shade direct sunlight from your eyes.

- Consider wrap-around sunglasses, which prevent light from entering the eyes from the sides.

- Check local weather reports for the UV index, which forecasts expected risk of sun overexposure.

- Help your kids pick out their own sunglasses. Fashion designs and cartoon licensing encourage them to actually want to wear sunglasses. Check the label for proper UV protection.

Wal-Mart Vision Centers, located in Wal-Mart stores nationwide, and all Wal-Mart Jewelry departments, offer a wide variety of sunglasses, including Serengeti, Bolle, and Police. Children's sunglasses range from \$2.98 to \$7.97; adults' range from \$5.96 to \$89.72.