

## Eyewear Tips For Winter Vacationers

by Rodney Tahran, O.D., F.A.A.O. (NAPS)—In addition to packing coats and ski boots, winter vacationers should remember to



**Dr. Tahran**

include eyewear appropriate to their planned activities. This is important because the proper lenses can protect your eyes from two types of danger: sun and physical injury.

The importance of protecting eyes from the sun's damaging rays during winter vacation activities is often overlooked. People who participate in winter sports should discuss their options for eyeglass lenses with their eye care professional.

For example, skiers, snowmobilers and others who spend a lot of time in the intense reflected light of snow often experience corneal sunburn, or photokeratitis, also known as "snow blindness." A result of short-term but intense exposure to UV-B rays, this condition causes eye pain, extreme sensitivity to light and the sensation of having sand in your eye. While the damage is not usually permanent, it can take a week for the cornea to heal.

To protect your eyes from this kind of sun damage, it is important to wear sunglasses that provide protection from ultraviolet light. According to Prevent Blindness America, sunglasses should block at least 70 percent of visible light. But in areas where light is intense, such as on snow, vacationers should choose sunglasses that block 85 to 90 percent of visible light.

For people who participate in winter sports and other active outdoor pastimes, I recommend polycarbonate lenses, which not only block UV rays but are also more impact-resistant than glass or conventional plastic lenses.

Today's high-grade polycarbonate technology has helped create such lenses as Essilor's new Airwear® lenses, which are scratch-resistant, resilient and thinner, lighter and flatter than ever before. This is a comfortable, attractive lens option that offers good protection from serious eye injury in the event of a fall or sporting accident.

Polycarbonate lenses are not new, but major technological advances in materials and designs over the last year or so have translated into more benefits for wearers. In short, eyeglass wearers no longer have to give up superior optics and lighter, thinner lenses to get impact resistance.

Essilor's lens researchers used the same technology that gives compact discs great sound quality to help design Airwear, polycarbonate lenses with superior optics. The new combination of design and coating technologies means that the lenses are up to 35 percent thinner, up to 43 percent lighter and 45 percent flatter than conventional plastic lenses. They may be prescribed to suit almost every eye correction need, from mid-range to high, and in single vision and progressive lenses.

Outdoor enthusiasts should discuss tinting and anti-reflective (AR) lenses with their eye care professional. Tints can enhance contrast and minimize color distortion; amber is an ideal high-contrast lens for snow sports.

AR lenses sharpen visual performance and reduce the glare that can cause eye strain and fatigue. Reflections on ordinary lenses can mean a loss of eight percent of visual transmission. With top-quality, durable AR lenses like Essilor's Crizal®, eyeglass wearers can recover more than 99 percent of visual transmission. AR lenses can also help make the drive back from the ski slopes at dusk or nighttime safer

by reducing the glare and distracting double images created by oncoming headlights.

When selecting winter eyewear frames, look for features such as padded or rubber bridges and deep-grooved eyewires, so lenses will not fall out easily. Contact lens wearers also should be aware that contacts alone do not provide sufficient protection for most sporting activities. They should also consider wearing protective sports eyeglasses. Goggles, with adequate ventilation to minimize fogging of lenses, are another suitable option.

Essilor of America, Inc., is the leading manufacturer and distributor of optical lenses in the United States and is the market leader in progressive, high-index and anti-reflective coated lenses under the Essilor, Varilux®, Airwear® and Crizal® brand names.

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*Dr. Rodney Tahran is vice president of professional relations and clinical affairs for Essilor of America, Inc., and serves as an adjunct professor at the Southern California College of Optometry. He has served on the board of Prevent Blindness Florida, and is a member of the American Optometric Association, The Institute for Contact Lens Research and the Association for Research in Vision Ophthalmology.*