

Protect Your Eyes from the Sun

Your eyes need sun protection too—just like your skin. Harmful UV rays can affect your eyes all year long, even on cloudy days. And don't forget: sunlight reflecting off snow can be just as damaging as glare from water.

DANGERS OF UV EXPOSURE

Even though you can't see ultraviolet (UV) light, your eyes absorb it. Over time, that exposure can lead to serious eye damage. Exposure to **UV is cumulative**, so even short periods in the sun without protection can increase the risk of long-term eye health problems.

Children are especially at risk. They spend more time outdoors than the average adult and their developing eyes aren't as good at filtering UV rays.

Eye conditions linked to UV exposure:

- + **Cataracts** – clouding of the eye's natural lens.
- + **Macular degeneration** – progressive damage to the retina, affects central vision.
- + **Photokeratitis** – sunburn on the cornea.
- + **Pingueculae** – small yellowish bumps on the white of the eye.
- + **Pterygium** – opaque growth that can spread across the cornea.
- + **Eyelid cancers.**



Short-term UV exposure can cause photokeratitis.

Long-term UV damage, including cataracts and macular degeneration, develop over years. Many long-term UV-related eye conditions don't show symptoms until they're advanced—by then, they may be difficult or even impossible to treat.

Prevention

Your optometrist can recommend the best ways to protect your eyes from UV damage.

- + Clear UV-blocking coatings, available for all types of lenses.
- + Tinted UV blocking glasses also reduce glare and brightness.
- + Photochromic lenses that darken automatically in sunlight but protect your eyes even when clear.
- + Clip-on lenses or oversized sunglasses worn over regular glasses.
- + Polarized lenses with UV protection to reduce eye fatigue from glare and reflection.
- + UV-protective contact lenses.
- + Pair lenses with a wide-brimmed hat or cap for extra protection.

Be careful! Tinted lenses do not necessarily block UV light. Look for the UV400 rating on your sunglasses, which means it blocks 99-100% of UV rays up to 400nm.



For information about many other common eye-related conditions, visit our website.
optometrists.ab.ca

A regular eye exam is an important part of maintaining your overall health.