



Protecting your eyes from ultraviolet rays

Protecting yourself from the sun isn't something to think about only in the summer. The harmful effects of the sun's ultraviolet (UV) rays happen year-round and can damage more than just the skin.



At least 10% of all cataract cases are caused by UV exposure.¹

There are two types of UV rays: UVA and UVB. UVA rays can damage the macula or the center part of the retina, which is what enables us to see. The macula is responsible for sharp, clear vision and the ability to see colors. UVB rays can damage the cornea and lens. The cornea is the eye's outer layer and functions like a window that controls and focuses the entry of light into the eye. Bright light can also decrease contrast, making it difficult to see objects clearly, and causing eyestrain and fatigue.

Long-term damage from UV rays can lead to health conditions that can cause vision loss, such as:

- **Cataracts** — A clouding of the eye's lens that can cause blurred vision. By age 40 and older, more than 20 million Americans will have cataracts.²
- **Age-related macular degeneration (AMD)** — Deterioration of the macula, which can lead to blurred, distorted vision and blind spots. About 11 million Americans have AMD.³ Age is the biggest risk factor.
- **Pterygium** — A growth in the corner of the eye that is usually not cancerous but can block vision and grow over the cornea.
- **Skin cancer around the eyelid** — More than half of all skin cancers around the eyelid are on the lower lid, but they can show up anywhere around the eye.⁴
- **Photokeratitis** — Known as a sunburn of the eye surface, it can be temporary but painful. The eyes become red, teary, and sensitive to light.

You can protect your eyes from UV rays and glare by:

- **Wearing sunglasses** that block 100% of UV rays, even on cloudy days.
- **Choosing Transitions® lenses for prescription glasses** which are regular lenses indoors but turn as dark as sunglasses outdoors, depending on the strength of UV rays — reducing glare and making the eyes more comfortable. They also block 100% of UVA and UVB rays.
- **Choosing bigger lenses to protect more of your eyes**, and wearing a wide-brimmed hat to block UV rays from the top and sides of your face.
- **Wearing contact lenses that filter out UV**, but remember that they do not protect the area around the eyes. For complete eye protection, wear sunglasses that shield most of the eye as well.

Anthem's vision plans also offer UV-blocking transition lenses at no cost to covered dependents under age 19.

Would you like to know more about protecting your eyes? Talk to your eye doctor about this and other vision topics.

¹ Skin Cancer Foundation website: *The Sun & Your Eyes* (accessed November 2020): skincancer.org.

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website: *Common Eye Disorders and Diseases* (accessed August 2020): cdc.gov.

³ MedlinePlus website: *Age-related macular degeneration* (accessed November 2020): medlineplus.gov.

⁴ Healthline website: *Is a Lump on the Eyelid a Sign of Cancer?* (accessed August 2020): healthline.com