

Don't forget to protect your eyes from UV rays

Over time UV rays can cause cataracts and macular degeneration

People are now beginning to realize the importance of protecting themselves against the dangers associated with too much sun.

The thinning of the earth's ozone layer has reduced the natural filtering action of the stratosphere, resulting in increased levels of ultraviolet radiation reaching the earth's surface.

This has led to a great deal of media attention and about the increased numbers of skin cancers, however, not a great deal of information has been presented on how ultraviolet light can affect the eyes.

Ultraviolet light exposure can cause both acute and cumulative ocular damage.

High level short term UV exposure, such as skiing, sunbathing or welding can cause damage to the cornea, the front surface of the eye.

Photokeratitis can be very painful, causing red eyes and reduced vision.

It typically appears up to six hours after exposure and usually resolves after 12 hours.

There are many causes for red, sore, bloodshot eyes, and your optometrist or ophthalmologist should be

consulted to determine the cause and treat you appropriately.

Long term UV exposure can cause pterygia and pterygium, which are the small whitish, raised bumps on the nasal sclera or white part of the eye.

Although cosmetically unappealing, they are generally harmless.

Long term UV exposure also causes cataracts and may be linked to macular degeneration as well.

Cataracts result when the lens inside the eye becomes cloudy, to the point that light cannot sufficiently pass through to allow proper vision.

Cataracts are a normal part of the aging process, however, ultraviolet exposure speeds up that process.

The treatment for cataracts is surgical removal with a lens implant.

Macular

degeneration damage to the part of the retina which allows for central vision. There is no cure.

Long term UV exposure can also cause several different types of skin cancers to the delicate skin of the eyelids.

So, what can you do to protect yourself? Avoid the sun during peak hours (10 am to 4 pm). Wear a hat to shade the eyes and wear sunglasses. Wear sunscreen.

Sunglasses need not be expensive, however, you want to make sure that the lenses are of good optical quality to reduce visual distortions and provide full ultraviolet screening protection.

A grey lens provides the most natural vision since it does not alter colour vision perception, but brown and green lenses are fine.

Polarized lenses provide wonderful relief from reflected glare (e.g. off roadways, car hoods and water), in addition to filtering ultraviolet light. There is an almost endless variety of frames to fit your needs.

Remember, even though we think of the summer as the time of year to be sun-conscious, exposure to ultraviolet radiation is a year-round threat.

Take care of your eyes, you'd be lost without them.

Some damage that is caused from long-term exposure to UV rays can be healed by surgery, others — such as Macular Degeneration — has **no cure.**

This article was submitted by
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THE ANNUAL MEETING OF
MARKHAM STOUFFVILLE HOSPITAL

will be held on
Tuesday, June 23, 1998
at 7:00 p.m.

in the Auditorium of
Markham Stouffville Hospital
381 Church Street
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Amendments to By-Laws
will be presented for ratification

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