

Protecting Your Eyes from UV



How Can I Protect My Eyes from UV Rays?

Most people know that sunlight can damage their skin — but many don't realize it can also harm their eyes. The sun gives off ultraviolet (UV) rays, which are invisible but powerful. Over time, too much UV exposure can lead to eye problems like cataracts, macular degeneration, pterygium, and even cancer on or around the eyes. The good news is that protecting your eyes from UV rays is simple and very effective once you know what to do.

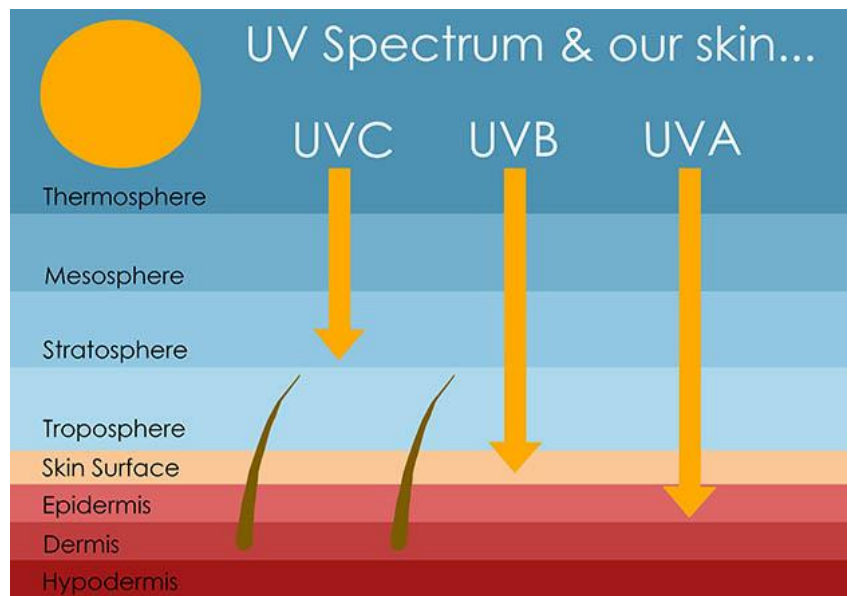
What Are UV Rays?

Ultraviolet rays are a form of radiation energy from the sun. There are two main types that reach the Earth's surface — UVA and UVB (UVC is absorbed in the atmosphere).

UVA rays penetrate deeply into the eye and can damage the retina over time.

UVB rays affect the front of the eye, especially the cornea, lens and skin around the eye.

Both types can cause short-term and long-term eye damage. UV exposure is strongest between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., during the summer, and at higher altitudes — but it's important to know that **UV rays are present every day, even when it's cloudy.**



How Can UV Rays Harm My Eyes?

Too much UV exposure can cause several eye problems, including:

Photokeratitis: A painful “sunburn” of the cornea, often caused by reflection from snow, water, or sand. It can cause redness, tearing, and temporary vision loss.



Cataracts: UV light speeds up clouding of the eye’s natural lens, which can lead to blurry vision.



Macular Degeneration: Long-term UV exposure may contribute to damage in the macula — the part of the retina responsible for central vision.

Pterygium: A small, fleshy growth on the white part of the eye that can spread toward the cornea. It’s common in people who spend a lot of time outdoors.



Skin cancer around the eyes: The delicate skin of the eyelids is particularly vulnerable to UV damage.

Even short bursts of intense UV light can cause discomfort, but the more serious effects often build up slowly over years.

How to Protect Your Eyes

1. Wear Sunglasses with UV Protection

Choose sunglasses that block 100% of UVA and UVB rays. Look for labels that say “UV400” or “100% UV protection.”

Polarized lenses can also reduce glare from reflective surfaces, like water or roads, though they don’t necessarily add more UV protection — so make sure both features are present.

Large or wraparound frames offer extra protection by blocking sunlight from the sides. Children should wear UV-blocking sunglasses too, since their eyes are more sensitive and they often spend more time outdoors.



2. Add a Hat for Extra Shade

A wide-brimmed hat or cap can block up to half of direct UV rays that reach your eyes. This simple step greatly reduces UV exposure — especially during midday sun.

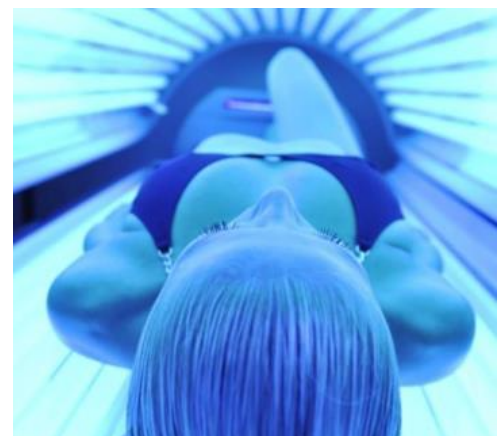


3. Be Careful Around Water, Snow, and Sand

UV rays reflect strongly off bright surfaces. Water and snow can double your exposure, so always wear sunglasses (and consider goggles when skiing or snowboarding). Even on cloudy or cold days, UV rays are still there.

4. Avoid Tanning Beds

Tanning beds produce intense artificial UV radiation that can harm your eyes just like sunlight — or even more. Always wear protective eyewear if you use them, though it’s best to avoid them altogether for the health of your eyes and skin.





5. Don't Forget UV Protection for Kids

Children's eyes absorb more UV light than adults' eyes do, making early protection essential. Encourage kids to wear sunglasses and hats whenever they're outdoors — it's a healthy habit for life.

6. Protect Your Eyes Year-Round

UV exposure happens every day, not only in summer. In winter, snow reflects sunlight, and at higher altitudes UV rays are much stronger. Keep your sunglasses handy year-round — they're as important as sunscreen.



What About Contact Lenses?

Some contact lenses include built-in UV protection, which helps reduce exposure to the parts of the eye they cover. However, they don't protect the eyelids or the white of the eye, so you should still wear sunglasses even if your lenses block UV.

In Summary

UV rays can quietly damage your eyes over time, leading to serious vision problems later in life. Protecting your eyes is easy — wear sunglasses that block 100% of UV rays, add a hat for shade, and be cautious around reflective surfaces like water, snow, and sand. Encourage children to do the same. These small, everyday steps will help keep your eyes healthy, comfortable, and safe for years to come.