



Toolbox Talks

UV Light Safety

Eye Damage

One of the greatest threats to your eyes is invisible UV light. Long-term exposure to invisible ultraviolet radiation can damage our eyes & lead to vision loss. Everyone is at risk, especially children.

Like your skin, your eyes never recover from UV exposure. Studies show that exposure to bright sunlight may increase the risk of developing cataracts & age-related macular degeneration, both leading causes of vision loss among older adults. UV exposure, wind, & dust can also cause pterygia, benign growths on the eye's surface. **The more exposure to bright light, the greater the chance of developing these eye conditions.**

In addition to the damage caused by a lifetime of exposure to bright sun, you need to protect your eyes from acute damage caused by outings on very bright days. Excessive exposure to ultraviolet light reflected off sand, snow, water, or pavement can damage the cornea, the eye's surface. **Such exposure can even occur if the sky is overcast & cloudy.**

"Sun damage to eyes can occur anytime during the year, not just in the summertime," said Richard Bensinger, MD, a comprehensive ophthalmologist in Seattle, Wash. **"...you should protect your eyes from damage all year long."**

Generally, UV light is at the greatest level at midday (10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.), but you need to protect your eyes whenever you're outside for a prolonged period, even when it's gray & overcast. Your eyes can be harmed by UV light sources other than the sun, such as welding lamps or tanning lights. So remember to wear eye protection when using these sources of invisible, high-energy UV rays.

Eye Protection

Long-term exposure to invisible ultraviolet radiation can damage our eyes & lead to vision loss.

Let's look at some tips to protect our eyes:

- **The most important thing you can do to protect your eyes is wear sunglasses that block ultraviolet rays.**
- Do not be deceived by color or cost. The ability to block UV light is not dependent on the darkness of the lens or the price tag.
- **Make sure your sunglasses block 99 percent or 100 percent of UV rays & UV-B rays.**
- Ideally, your sunglasses should wrap all the way around to your temples, so the sun's rays cannot enter from the side.
- **In addition to your sunglasses, wear a broad-rimmed hat to protect your eyes.**
- Do not be fooled by a cloudy day. The sun's rays can pass through the haze & thin clouds.
- **Even if you wear contacts with UV protection, remember your sunglasses.**
- Sunglasses should be worn whenever outside. It is especially important to wear sunglasses in the early afternoon & in higher altitudes, where UV light is more intense. Typically that is 11:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m.

Skin Protection

At one time or another we've all had a bad sunburn, & we know how bad it can hurt. In addition, **prolonged, unprotected exposure can damage your skin & cause premature lines, freckles, sun spots, & skin cancer.**

UV rays react with a chemical called melanin that's found in most people's skin. Melanin is the first defense against the sun because it absorbs dangerous UV rays before they do serious skin damage. Melanin is found in different concentrations & colors, resulting in different skin colors. **The lighter a person's natural skin color, the less melanin it has to absorb UV & protect itself.**

The best way to protect your skin from UV light is by wearing a sunscreen when you are outside.

Here are some sunscreen facts & tips:

- **Using sunscreen can reduce your chances of burning but it is not going to allow you to spend unlimited time outdoors without risk of skin damage.**
- Sunscreen must absorb into the skin to be effective. Apply it about 30 minutes prior to going into the sun so as to let the sunscreen absorb into the skin.
- **It is widely recommended that people use sunscreen with an SPF (sun protection factor) of 15-30. An SPF of 30 can block up to 97% of the harmful UV rays. Going higher than 30 on SPF hasn't shown to make a positive difference.**
- Sunscreen needs to be reapplied every 60-90 minutes, sooner if you're in the water. (This is true even if you use "waterproof" sunscreen, as it is not truly waterproof, just water resistant.)
- **Not all sunscreens protect you from UVA and UVB light. Check the label & use one that protects the skin from both.**

You can get a sunburn through your clothes! For example, a white t-shirt gives only the same protection as a sunscreen with an SPF of 5. & it's even less effective if it is wet.



All information found at www.safetytoolboxtalks.com