

Taking Care of Those Eyes



As a responsible tanner--indoors and outdoors--you must remember to take care of your eyes. While many people view eyewear as a means to make a fashion statement, the simple truth is eyewear originally was developed to protect eyes from the rays of the sun and flying debris.

However, because eyewear has become a staple of the fashion world, many forget that potential damage from excessive ultraviolet light exposure to the eyes can result in serious injury and permanent damage.

Let's face the facts—eye damage is cumulative. Do you recall when our grammar school teachers extolled the dangers of looking directly into a solar eclipse? Well, believe it or not, they knew what they were talking about. Not only can direct sunlight cause harm, but did you know that reflective ultraviolet rays from sand and snow also can damage your eyes?

Your tanning salon professional reminds you to wear protective goggles or disposable eyewear for a reason. And although the U.S. Food and Drug Administration requires you to wear them while you are in a tanning bed, your common sense should be screaming that message loud and clear.

The following information should help you understand the facts about tanning and your eyes:

- *Eyelids will not tan, they will burn.*
- *Ultraviolet damage is cumulative.*
- *Closing your eyes does not protect them from potential ultraviolet damage.*
- *The short-term health risk is a corneal burn, which is a sunburn on the surface of the eye. These burns show up within a few hours of overexposure and are characterized by increased sensitivity, a burning sensation and excessive tearing. The effects apparently are temporary and usually disappear within a day or so.*
- *The long-term health risk includes brunescent cataracts, which is a clouding or a pigmentation of the lens within the eye. They are slow to develop, usually occurring over a matter of years, but they are permanent. The clouding affects night vision and also can alter perception of color.*

Unfortunately, cataract surgery is the only known cure.

Whether you are skiing down the slopes of Telluride, lounging on the beach in St. Thomas or catching 15 minutes of tanning at a tanning salon, you must protect your eyes--they are the only ones you have.



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