



Beware of the effects of winter sun

Sunglasses are rarely forgotten during hot and sunny summer afternoons, but they are too often overlooked during the winter months. Yet ultraviolet or UV rays from the sun are powerful all year round. Plus, the sun is at a lower elevation in the sky creating increased glare. In fact, the glare of winter can actually be as difficult and dangerous as on a sunny summer day. It is very important to protect your eyes while outside working or if you are participating in recreational activities such as skiing, snow boarding or ice skating. Snow and ice can reflect 80 to 90 percent of UV rays, while grass only reflects 2.5 to 3 percent of UV rays.¹

Choosing the right sunglasses

According to The Vision Council, the best way to select sunglasses is to look for sunglasses with the following features:

- Polarized or mirror-coated lenses to filter reflected glare from shiny surfaces like water, pavement and dashboards.
- Oversized frames to protect the sides of your eyes from UV rays, as well as for keeping out dust and debris.
- Lens tints that can improve performance by enhancing contrast, colors and visibility.
- Look for sunglasses marked as 99 percent or better UV protection.
- Plastic frames, with wrap-around styling to keep out wind and snow and minimize glare.

Remember the kids. Children need protection from the sun's damaging UV rays, too. So lead by example and wear your sunglasses, and your kids will want to wear theirs, too.

Alternatives to sunglasses

As an alternative to sunglasses, there are special lenses you can use for your everyday eyeglasses called photochromic lenses. Photochromic lenses change from light to dark depending on the amount of ultraviolet light they are exposed to.² In the sun, photochromics darken, and indoors, the lenses lighten. Photochromic lenses, especially when combined with an anti-reflective (AR) coating, can also reduce uncomfortable and disabling glare. In extreme conditions, like when skiing, ice fishing or distance driving, polarized lenses are also recommended.

Reducing glare can help improve your overall quality of vision and minimize eye strain and fatigue. Regular visits to your optometrist or ophthalmologist are a simple step you can take to care for your eyes. During your next eye exam, don't forget to discuss with your eye care provider the types of lenses that are available to you and the importance of UV protection.

Sources

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, <http://www.cdc.gov/excite/skincancer/mod06.htm>

² American Optometric Association, <http://www.aoa.org/documents/SunglassShoppingGuide0810.pdf>

Additional Sources

The Vision Council — The Vision Council serves as the global voice for vision care products and services, and represents the manufacturers and suppliers of the optical industry.

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