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Do You Protect Your Child's Eyes During the Summer?

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Sarah Cody



Most of us parents don't know how important it is to protect our kids' eyes during the summer months. "They think about everything else. They think about sunscreen for the skin but eyes are not up there on the top of the list," says Dr. Shawn Burns of the [Family Vision Centers in Stratford and Bridgeport](#). "It's so important with children to cut back the amount of ultraviolet light they're exposed to because children's eyes are not fully developed. The lens in their eye is not fully developed to protect the back of the eye as well as it does for an adult."

Research shows, we should be paying attention. [A 2014 study by Essilor](#), creators of corrective lens designs, showed 3.2 million people go blind each year due to prolonged exposure to ultraviolet rays. Also, too much exposure to UV light in children increases the risk of them having eye diseases, including growths on the eye and cancer as adults.

UV exposure can cause short term damage, such as sunburn on the cornea or photokeratitis. "That's when the eyes can get really red and sore for 2 to 3 days, similar to how you can get snow blindness if you're skiing or snow boarding outside in winter," says Burns, noting that these conditions don't lead to permanent damage but others can. "Long term exposure to ultraviolet rays can lead to development of cataracts, macular degeneration and those things are much more serious. Later in life they can cause problems with vision."

UV risk is the worst between 8am - 10am and 2pm - 4pm.

Safety tips for kids:

****Wear sunglasses. "You want to be sure you have sunglasses that have 100% UVA and UVB***

protection," advises Burns.

**Wear hat.*

**Don't look directly into the sun.*

**Wear protection even when it's overcast.*

What if kids don't cooperate? "Mom, it's annoying to wear sunglasses," or, "I lost them!"

Find a fun pair, advises Burns: "Nowadays, glasses, in general, are becoming more of a fashion statement. You can get some very cool sunglasses."

The results are worth the effort.

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