

Shield your eyes from summer sun

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You probably slather on sunscreen to protect your skin, but your eyes need protection from the sun's rays, too.

Wearing sunglasses can be protective and reduce your chances of developing a condition called [photokeratitis](#).

When your cornea—the surface of your eye—is exposed to intense ultraviolet rays, you can develop this painful condition, said Dr. Richard Hession, an assistant professor of ophthalmology at UT Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas.

With photokeratitis, the outermost layer of the cornea sloughs off and falls away, causing very sensitive nerve endings of the eye to feel intense pain, he said.

Just spending a lot of time in the sun is unlikely to cause photokeratitis, but it can happen when there are also sun reflections from water.

[UV rays](#) from tanning beds are another source. Welders and others who work with intense light are at greatest risk.

That's why Hession recommends that people always wear the [eye protection](#) their jobs require. For those enjoying the summer sun, it's important to wear an SPF 30 sunscreen on exposed [skin](#), a wide-brimmed hat and [sunglasses](#), he said in a center news release. [Eye protection](#) also helps protect tender skin around the eyes from cancer.

You can further care for your eyes with an eye exam. For children, this includes screening by a pediatrician with a follow-up with an ophthalmologist if a potential problem is detected.

Most adolescents and adults who need glasses or contacts will receive a complete dilated eye exam by their optometrist or ophthalmologist when they go to update their prescriptions.

All adults, even those with no apparent vision problems, should get a

complete eye exam starting at age 40.

Several conditions can develop and progress without symptoms as a person ages. This includes [glaucoma](#), a disease that causes progressive damage to the [optic nerve](#), resulting in loss of peripheral vision, and eventually total blindness. Patients can experience a significant loss of vision from glaucoma before they are diagnosed.

More information: The American Academy of Ophthalmology has more on the [impact of sun on your eyes](#).

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