

A little sunshine is good for us, too much isn't. We smother ourselves with sun cream to prevent burning our skin, but what about our eyes? It's just as important to protect our vision from exposure to ultra-violet rays. Deborah Chillman visits Ivan R Cammack optometrist, to discover why.

Bright eyes

We need to safeguard ourselves against damaging sun light. As with our skin, our eyes can be just as susceptible to the harmful effects of too much exposure to ultra-violet radiation.

It can damage the cornea, lens and even the retina. Long-term exposure to ultra-violet rays can mean you are more likely to get cataracts earlier, and there is an increased risk of developing macular degeneration. While parts of our bodies have the ability to repair damaged cells, the lens of the eye is an exception. It needs as much protection as possible.

"UV radiation isn't just a problem in the summer," says Ivan Cammack. "Outdoors in almost any location, whatever the season, we get exposed to ultra-violet light. And don't imagine that cloudy days are their own protection. UV radiation can penetrate overcast skies and can reflect off all sorts of surfaces – snow, water, concrete, cars, pavements.

During these winter months, the sun is low in the sky, glaring right into the eyes of drivers as well.

Younger people are especially vulnerable to the effects of UV radiation

since they have larger pupils, clearer lenses and tend to spend more time outside. Short-term damage is hard to notice, but over the longer-term sunlight can cause irreversible harm to the structures of the eye.

So, what can we do to protect our eyes? "Good protective lenses" says Ivan.

"Sunglasses came in all shapes and sizes, and we stock a superb selection but as an Optometrist, for me, it's all about having the right lens," he adds.

Sunglass and spectacle lenses don't come much better than Zeiss.

With a fine reputation for optical glass used in microscopes, cameras and spectacles, Zeiss has a proud history.

In the world of tinted and sun protection lenses, Zeiss is well known for its precise range of tints and technologies used on high quality products.

The huge range of functional colours available from Zeiss covers special outdoor applications and provide maximum sun protection and enhanced visual contrast.

A good pair of sunglasses can help protect the eyes against UV radiation and glare. Glare reduces the clarity of our vision and can even lead to eye irritation

and headache. With Skylet® sunglass lenses from Zeiss, the blue portion of light is more strongly absorbed, a marked increase in contrast can additionally be achieved. This results in comfortable, clear vision with astounding contrast.

For people who wear sunglasses for outdoor activities, Zeiss offer more than just UV protection. From leisure activities to performance sports, extreme light conditions outdoors means protecting our eyes from the elements. While ensuring amazing optics for wrapped frames to provide excellent dynamic vision.

Wrapped lenses for sport frames offer clear optics and protection from dust from the nose to the temporal side.

For the ultimate in Sunglass Optics, Polarised Skylet® combines a polarisation filter with contrast enhancing Skylet® tinting for a unique visual experience in extreme light conditions.

Thanks to the colour-enhancing effect of Skylet®, Polarised Skylet® increases safety, but also offers excellent colour rendition.

It's vital we look after the health of our eyes. So it's good to know a visionary company like Zeiss and optometrists like Ivan R Cammack are so committed to caring for our vision.



Cataract care

Symptoms and Signs

A cataract starts small and at first has little effect on your vision. You may notice that your vision is blurred a little, like looking through a cloudy piece of glass or viewing an impressionist painting.

A cataract may make light from the sun or a lamp seem too bright or glaring. Or you may notice when you drive at night that the oncoming headlights cause more glare than before. Colours may not appear as bright as they once did.

What Causes Cataracts?

The lens of the eye works much like a camera lens, focusing light onto the retina for clear vision. It also adjusts the eye's focus, letting us see things clearly both up close and far away.

With the passing of years, the lens which is just behind the pupil becomes less flexible, and this slowly but surely steals our ability to adjust our focus.

At the same time, the lens is gradually losing its perfect clarity, eventually causing cloudy vision and light scatter.

Some people describe this like 'looking through a waterfall'. This is cataract, and sooner or later it affects everyone. But we are not all affected equally.

Prevention?

The changes that happen to the lens of the eye are predictable but regrettably not preventable. However the rate that cataract develops can be influenced. We can help ourselves.

There is a strong link between smoking tobacco and cataract, so stop (or better still don't start) smoking. A diet rich in green vegetables and fish, which is high in omega-3 fatty acids helps.

The biggest difference we can make is to banish UVA. This is the spectrum of ultra violet light that helps us tan and contributes to skin ageing. It is also the main cause for cataracts developing early.

So take Ivan's advice, and wear a good quality pair of sun glasses, whether you need vision correction or not.

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