



# UV RADIATION

## The Eyes Have It, Too!

**Protect your family's eyes from dangerous exposure to UV rays.**

By Lana Turnbull

Whether the family is around the pool, at the baseball game, or just spending time together in the backyard, most parents know they should be vigilant about using sunscreen to help prevent the damaging effects the sun's UV rays have on skin. *But, should you be worried about your family's eyes?* Actually, extended exposure to the sun's UV rays has been linked to serious eye damage, including cataracts, macular degeneration, and other conditions.

To protect your family's eyes from harmful solar radiation, experts recommend sunglasses that block 100 percent of UV rays and absorb most HEV (high-energy visible)

radiation – and that's for every member of the family from babies to seniors. Choose your frames wisely, too. Frames that are close-fitting and wrap around the side of the face provide the best protection because they help to limit the sunlight that reaches eyes from above and the sides.

The amount of UV protection sunglasses provide is unrelated to the color and darkness of the lenses. A light amber-colored lens can provide the same UV protection as a dark gray lens. If you are not sure of the amount of UV protection provided by your sunglasses, your eye care professional can verify if the lenses you choose will block 100 percent of UV rays

According to Kirk R. Jeffreys, III, M.D., Ophthalmologist, with EyeCare Professionals in Jackson, the more time you spend outdoors, the greater the risk to your vision, if you don't take precautions.

"Anybody who spends time outdoors is at risk of receiving damaging UV rays to their eyes," notes Jeffreys. "But, there are some factors that can put you at an even higher risk, such as where you live. The closer you are to the equator, the higher the levels of UV radiation – also, the higher the altitude, the greater the risk. And, you need to remember that when the sun is at its highest between 10:00 am and 2:00 pm, and when you are in open spaces with highly reflective surfaces, like sand, water, and snow, the UV risk is higher. Additionally, some medications such as birth control pills, diuretics and tranquilizers, can increase your body's sensitivity to UV radiation."

Dr. Jeffrey's suggests that in addition to a good pair of sunglasses, you can help keep UV rays from your eyes by wearing a wide-brimmed hat or cap. This goes for the kids as well.

Since the sun damage to the eyes is cumulative, and happens over your lifetime, the best way to make sure no problems are developing is to see your doctor.

"If you are having trouble with your vision," explains Dr. Jeffreys, "you should see your Ophthalmologist for a checkup right away. Otherwise, I recommend that individuals under the age of twenty have an eye exam every year. Ages twenty to sixty, you should see your eye care professional every other

year, and then after age sixty, annually. It's important to note that 50 percent of our exposure to UV rays occurs by the time we are eighteen years old. That's another reason to be sure we are



To protect your eyes outdoors, always choose sunglasses with 100 percent UV protection.

adequately protecting our children's eyes."

Remember, UV rays are not affected by cloud cover, so wear your sunglasses even on cloudy days, year round, and since UV rays can be reflected from buildings, roadways, and other surfaces, continue to wear sun protection for your eyes when you are in the shade.

By understanding the serious effects of sun exposure on your family's eyes and taking a few simple precautions, you can help to protect them from the real and ongoing threat posed by UV radiation. ☺

*Kirk R. Jeffreys, III, M.D., is a member of the professional staff of EyeCare Professionals, in Jackson. A native of Jackson, Mississippi, Dr. Jeffreys received his Doctor of Medicine degree from the University of Mississippi School of Medicine in Jackson and completed his Internal Medicine Internship and Ophthalmology Residency at University of Mississippi Medical Center. He also completed the Basic Sciences Course in Ophthalmology from Harvard University. Jeffreys is Board Certified by the American Board of Ophthalmology.*



### Special Protection for Little Eyes

By Missy Spell

Children are at special risk from the harmful effects of UV rays, since their eyes do not have the same ability as adults to protect them from UV radiation and generally they spend much more time outdoors. So, it's especially important to be sure that your children's eyes are protected from the sun with good quality sunglasses.

According to Dr. Jimbo Bearden, of Professional Eye Care in Madison and Canton, "It is never too early to start your little one in sunglasses, but parents may notice that in the first year it is hard if not impossible to get your child to keep his or her sunglasses on. If that is the case with your child, a shade on the car seat or tint on the car windows offer some protection."

Sunhats, caps and visors, can also help shield your child's eyes from the sun's harmful rays.

"When purchasing sunglasses for your child you should be sure to choose a lens that has UV protection," Dr. Bearden adds.

"All sun glasses are not created equal so be sure to ask your eye care professional which lenses are best for your child."

There are a number of reputable companies that make high quality sunglasses for babies and children. Ray Ban, for example, carries a line for children as young as one. Whatever the make, most experts agree that if possible, you should choose polarized and polycarbonate lenses – polarized lenses reduce glare and polycarbonate lenses provide extra damage resistance.