

## Tips for Picking Sunglasses

Written by Emily Glynn

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### **Ditch the cheap, candy-hued frames and get seriously shady with these medically proven pointers.**

Few Arizonans doubt the importance of lathering up but when it comes to sunglasses, many draw a blank. “A lot of people don’t realize that just like you protect your skin from the sun by wearing sunscreen, wearing sunglasses prevents degenerative changes as well,” says Jetal Patel, OD, an optometrist at Southwestern Eye Center. But a lifetime of unshaded sun exposure can lead to more than crow’s feet and unsightly skin lesions. Long-term effects include cataracts and macular degeneration—severe conditions that can cause permanent blindness.

Other conditions, like *photokeratitis*, develop quickly and suddenly. “You see this a lot in patients who go skiing, where you have a lot of sun reflecting off the surface [of the snow],” says Patel. Water and sand are equally reflective, so beachgoers who forgo sunglasses also run the risk. The symptoms are nasty—inflammation, sunburnt corneas and painful blisters that develop on surface of the eye.

Regardless of what debuts on the runway this spring, make an effort to put safety ahead of style and always double-check for 100 percent UVA and UBA protection. Labels indicating UV 400 protection are just as well. This essentially blocks UV rays with wavelengths up to 400 nanometers, which includes all UVA and UBA rays. And don’t be duped by extra-dark lenses. According to a survey conducted by the American Association of Ophthalmology, 53 percent of people mistakenly assume that darker shades mean better protection.

If you’re still having doubts about your new sunnies, seek out a professional. “You can always take [your sunglasses] to an optician who will measure the amount of UV light the lens is absorbing,” reassures Patel.

So, what are you waiting for? Take the preventative steps now rather than later and invest in a solid pair of shades to ensure you’re getting the proper protection. Your peepers will thank you.