

Summer Eye Protection

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With the Valley's heat and the amount of chlorine in swimming pools, protecting the eyes during summer is critically important. Dr. Kristia Owens, OD of Southwestern Eye Center, has offered essential information for protecting the eyes against the sun's rays and chlorine.



What's so bad about chlorine and UV light?

Pools with chlorine have chloramines, which can be irritating to the outer surface of the eyes and the cornea. This irritation can eventually cause the top layer of cells to die on the cornea. When the eye's natural protection becomes impaired, bacterial or other types of infection can occur.

The most common effect of chlorine is blurred vision. This is due to swimming unprotected for a long period of time. The cornea swells and vision will appear foggy. If the eyes are blurry for more than a day it is recommended to see an eye doctor.

Tips to protect:

- If you wear contacts, take them off before swimming. Contact lens can harbor bacteria, microbes or parasites.
- Wear swim goggles and sunglasses with UVA and UVB as often as possible. This is the best option to protect those beautiful, ageless eyes. They even make goggles with prescription for those who want to see clearly in the water.
- Use artificial teardrops to replenish those red eyes; it will restore the natural tear quality and quantity. Drops like Systane Gel and Soothe XP have a longer lasting formula.
- Having a salt-water pool has the same pH as tears and don't have chloramines, causing much less irritation to the front surface of the eye. However, it doesn't mean you shouldn't wear goggles!
- If you do swim with contact lenses, make sure to use a cleaning solution that utilizes hydrogen peroxide as the cleaning agent. This is the best disinfection regimen available.

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