

# Summer eyecare advice

**Keep your eyes healthy and bright all Summer long with our seasonal eyecare advice.**

## Cover up

Just like your skin your eyes can get sunburnt too! Excessive exposure to the sun's damaging rays can cause red, irritated and watery eyes.

Cumulative UV exposure can also increase your risk of developing a range of sight threatening conditions including age-related macular degeneration and cataracts.

Reflective surfaces like the sea, swimming pools and even, dry sandy beaches, can all intensify UV levels.

The best way to protect your eyes against damage from UV light is to stop the rays entering the eyes by wearing sunglasses – over-sized or wrap-around styles offer the greatest protection.

Always check your shades block out at least 99 per cent of UVA and UVB light and look out for a CE Mark or the British Standard BSEN 1836:2005 when buying sunglasses as this will ensure they provide adequate UV protection.

Good sunglasses don't need to be expensive. It's the degree to which the lens filters UVA and UVB light that counts - not the price tag!

Many prescription lenses have a built-in UV filter, so, if you wear glasses or contact lenses, ask your optometrist if they provide protection from the sun.

Wearing a wide-brimmed hat or visor can also provide valuable protection for your eyes.

It's particularly important to ensure kids' eyes are protected as big pupils and clearer lenses mean up to 70 per cent more UV light reaches the retina of a child's eye.

In fact, by the age of 18, more than half a lifetime's worth of ultraviolet light will have been absorbed by a child's eye.

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The Eyecare Trust is a registered charity that exists to promote awareness of all aspects of eye health. For more information call our public information line on 0845 129 5001 or visit [www.eyecaretrust.org.uk](http://www.eyecaretrust.org.uk)

# Summer eyecare advice cont'd...

## Eat your sunscreen

You can also protect your eyes from the damaging effect of UV light on the inside by eating more green and yellow fruits and vegetables.

Seasonal fruits and vegetables such as corn-on-the-cob, avocado, lettuce and spinach are packed full of lutein and zeaxanthin. These eye friendly nutrients can help to protect against the UV's damaging blue rays.

## Travel advice

Humidity levels on aeroplanes drop to just 10 -15%. These dry air conditions can cause and exacerbate symptoms of dry eye – a sandy/gritty feeling, burning sensation and dry, itchy, red or tired eyes.

These symptoms can affect all travellers – a survey of Australian pilots even found that almost three quarters (72%) experience dry eye symptoms whilst flying.

Lubricating eye drops and hydrating your body by drinking plenty of fluids (non-alcoholic) before and during your flight should help minimise your symptoms.

If you wear contact lenses it is advisable to remove them when flying.

## Seasonal eye disorders

Eye irritations caused by **grass pollen allergies** (hay fever) peak during June and July. Symptoms, which are often worse on hot sunny days, include red, itchy, swollen and watery eyes.

Ninety five per cent of the UK's 15 million hay fever sufferers are allergic to grass pollen.

To minimise symptoms the Trust advises that sufferers check the pollen count before leaving home, keep house and car windows closed, wear wrap-around sunglasses and avoid cutting grass.

Used tea bags that have been kept in the fridge over-night can be used as a cold compress to help relieve discomfort and reduce any swelling around the eye.

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## Summer eyecare advice cont'd...

Antihistamines are often very effective at treating symptoms of grass pollen allergies - particularly if they are taken prior to the onset of any symptoms. Ask your optometrist for advice.

For more extreme symptoms you may consider trying Immunotherapy – a treatment that involves patients being given small doses of grass pollen to try and desensitise the immune system and provoke a more normal reaction to the allergen.

Incidence of **vernal conjunctivitis** – an allergic inflammation of the conjunctiva, the transparent membrane covering the white of the eye – peak between April and August.

Symptoms consist of redness, swelling of the conjunctiva, swollen eyelids, itchiness and acrimation (increased production of tears). It's sometimes also combined with rhinitis (itchy nose and sneezing).

The condition is usually treated using antihistamines and eyedrops - your optometrist can recommend different kinds according to your particular needs.

### Snap happy

A careful look at your holiday photos could help detect signs of common eye conditions such as a squint or lazy eyes.

If one of your child's eyes looks as though it is turning outwards or if the eyes look different in anyway it's advisable to visit your optometrist for a sight test.

Children's eyes can be tested at any age - they don't need to be able to read.

You should also consult your optometrist immediately if one of your child's eyes has what looks like a white pupil as this could be a sign of a rare eye condition known as Retinoblastoma (cancer of the eye).

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