

## **Sunglasses Reduce Surgeries**

Most people are aware that excessive sun exposure can result in sun burn and skin cancer, but most people are unaware that significant sun exposure can damage multiple parts of the eye. As the summer months approach, it is important to protect your eyes from the sun's harmful rays.

The surface of the eye can be damaged by a combination of ultraviolet (UV) radiation, dryness and dust. The result of this combination of insults is called a pterygium, a fleshy growth stretching from the white surface of the eye onto the colored part of the eye. Mild cases can simply be monitored but a more advanced pterygium, which causes eye irritation and distorted vision, needs to be surgically removed from the surface of the eye. Sunglasses that block UV radiation and lubricating drops will help protect the eyes from developing a pterygium.

Significant UV exposure over many years can speed the development of cataracts, a clouding of the normally clear lens inside the eye. Symptoms of cataracts include blurred vision, haloes and glare. When the symptoms interfere with daily activities, cataract surgery is recommended. Wearing sunglasses can delay the development of cataracts.

Finally, macular degeneration, the most common cause of blindness in people over 65 years old, is often caused by UV damage to the retina. Although smoking, family history and diet are also key risk factors in the development of macular degeneration, wearing sunglasses can significantly reduce the risk of developing this common blinding condition.

There are many options when choosing protective eyewear. Polarization, tint, prescription and style can be optimized to enhance vision. See a local optician to help find a pair of sunglasses to protect your eyes from dangerous UV radiation.