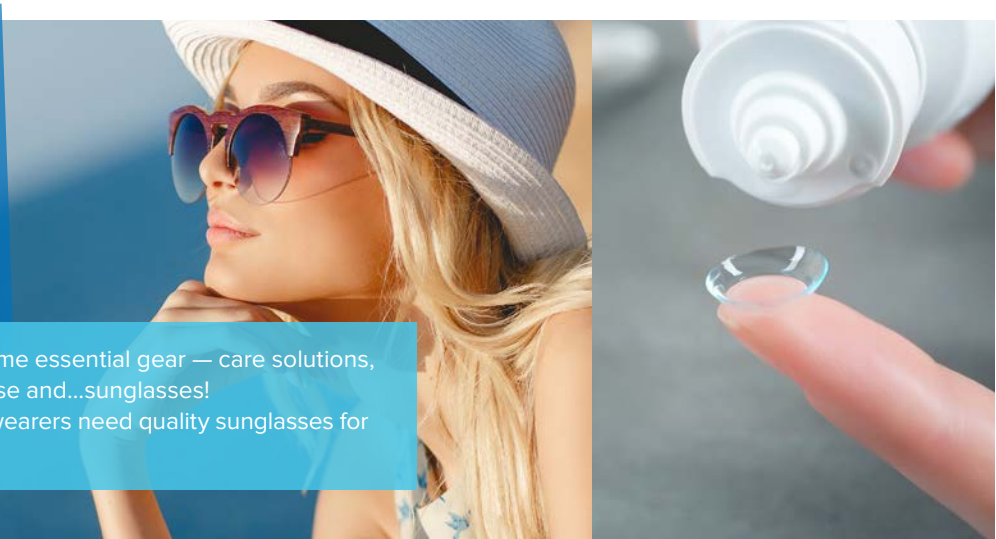


5 REASONS SUNGLASSES ARE ESSENTIAL FOR CONTACT LENS WEARERS

BY GARY HEITING, OD

Wearing contact lenses requires some essential gear — care solutions, rewetting drops, a clean storage case and...sunglasses! Without exception, all contact lens wearers need quality sunglasses for these five reasons:



1 PROTECTION FROM UV RAYS

The eyes of someone wearing contacts are more exposed to the sun's ultraviolet (UV) radiation than those of people who wear eyeglasses. Most premium eyeglass lenses — even lenses that are not tinted — block nearly 100 percent of the sun's harmful UV rays.

While it's true that some contact lenses block UV, these lenses block only up to 90 percent of the most prevalent UV rays (UVA). And contacts without a built-in UV filter block only about 10 percent UVA and 30 percent of higher energy UV rays (UVB).

To reduce the risk of eye problems associated with too much UV radiation exposure over a person's lifetime — the eyes should be shielded from 100 percent of the sun's UV rays.

Also, contact lenses that block UV do nothing to protect the eyelids and delicate skin around the eyes from UV damage that may cause skin cancer. Only a quality pair of sunglasses that block 100 percent UV provide contact lens wearers the protection they need from the sun.

2 PROTECTION FROM HEV RADIATION

UV isn't the only radiation emitted by the sun that can cause eye damage. High energy visible light (HEV or "blue light") is visible electromagnetic energy that can penetrate deep into the eye.

Cumulative exposure to HEV radiation over a lifetime, especially from the sun, increases the risk of retinal cell damage and macular degeneration.

UV-blocking contact lenses do nothing to protect the eyes from HEV rays. Only quality sunglasses protect the eyes from this potentially harmful radiation.

3 PROTECTION FROM DRY EYE DISCOMFORT

The primary reason people discontinue wearing contacts is dry eye discomfort. Wearing sunglasses over contact lenses when outdoors shields the eyes from wind that can cause contacts to dry out and become uncomfortable.

Protection from drying wind is especially important for contact lens wearers who enjoy running, biking, and other sports and activities that increase the movement of air across the surface of the eyes.

For the best protection from contact lens related dry eyes, sunglasses that feature a close-fitting sport frame are most effective.

4 PROTECTION FROM INJURY

A contact lens wearer's eyes are more exposed than the eyes of someone who wears eyeglasses, increasing the risk of injury during sports activities and from flying debris.

For the best eye protection when wearing contacts, choose sunglasses with lightweight, impact-resistant Trivex or polycarbonate lenses and a comfortable, durable frame of adequate size to fully shield the eyes.

5 BETTER VISUAL CLARITY AND COMFORT

Contact lens wearers typically are more sensitive to bright sunlight than a person wearing eyeglasses. Sunglasses worn over contacts reduce the glare and discomfort from sunlight — even on partly cloudy, hazy or overcast days — that can be particularly bothersome to someone wearing contact lenses.

For bright, high-glare situations — such as fishing, boating and driving — polarized sunglass lenses provide superior comfort and clarity.

Gary Heiting, OD, has more than 20 years experience as a clinical optometrist.

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