Year-round Sunglasses Use Urged

In preparation for summer, sun worshippers usually update their beach-going equipment, including buying a new pair of sunglasses when necessary.

Experts in the eyewear field advise us that sunglasses should be part of our outdoor life year-round, not just during the bright and sunny summer months.

“The basic reason (to wear sunglasses) is for the protection of the eyes against burn or cataracts and to make you more comfortable (by reducing the amount of light reaching the eye),” said Phillip L. Kaufman, vice president of the Illinois Optometric Association and a practicing optometrist.

The spectrum of light consists of different wave lengths ranging from ultraviolet at one end to infrared at the other, with a visible range in the middle, Kaufman said.

“The two types of light that do damage to your eyes are the ultraviolet and the infrared. What most (non-prescription) sunglasses will filter out is the visible spectrum, but not the infrared and ultraviolet. In order to get both the infrared and ultraviolet, one has to wear optically manufactured lenses with special dyes for tints that block out the harmful rays.”

Another problem with buying over-the-counter sunglasses at the local drug or variety store is that many of the lenses are distorted.

“Hold up a pair of real cheap sunglasses, about a foot away and see for yourself,” said Kaufman. “If the line of the lens is not perfectly straight from top to bottom and right to left (or the edge distorts, sways, curves or moves), that lens has some distortion in it and can make you uncomfortable. However, the human visual system is so miserably adaptable that patients learn to adapt to them.”

Sunglasses have become very fashionable, Kaufman said.

“And they (consumers) are exposing themselves to conditions for fashion’s sake and getting away from the protective value of sunglasses, and that is not good.”

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