

A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO UV EYE DAMAGE

BY BRENDA FISHBAUGH

“Do I really need to wear eye protection when I tan?”

Indoor tanners have asked this question of salon operators since indoor tanning began. Unlike our skin, our eyes don't have the ability to tan (and thus, develop no protection), so they can suffer many types of damage from UV exposure. Here's a quick-reference guide to what can happen to unprotected eyes over-exposed to UV light.

Photokeratitis: Also called “snow blindness,” this happens after a single unprotected tanning session! Your eyelids only block 25% of UV rays, so your eye burns and then, peels. Within 24 hours of your tanning session, you experience a sharp burning sensation that feels like you have something in your eyes. You do; your cornea is peeling, causing acute pain. In addition to being almost blind for one to three days, your eyes will be red and weep uncontrollably. The FDA reports this as the No. 1 reason tanners seek medical attention after a single unprotected tanning

session. Once you've burned your eyes, they are more susceptible to future burns.

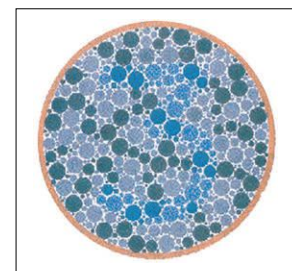
Night Vision Loss: This begins after the first tanning session without eye protection and is cumulative. It's not surprising for teens to have already lost substantial night vision, and NO drug or surgery will restore night vision. You'll first notice it in low-light situations such as movie theatres, clubs or bars, and while driving at night. The ONLY way to lose your night vision is UV over-exposure, such as occurs during unprotected indoor tanning sessions, or from tanning outdoors without sunglasses.

Color Vision Loss: UV eye damage can include the inability to distinguish different shades of the same color. It's not unusual for teens to already have trouble distinguishing the number in the square pictured at right. Again, there is NO drug and NO surgery that restores color vision. Sharp color vision is important if you're interested in careers such as photography, fashion, aviation, website design, video game design, advertising and marketing,

graphic design, architecture or retail. The ONLY way to lose color vision is from UV over-exposure, such as occurs during unprotected indoor tanning sessions, or from tanning outdoors without sunglasses.

Pyterigium: This type of growth on the eye is most often caused by UV over-exposure; while it usually doesn't affect vision, it is unsightly. It can be removed if it makes blinking difficult, but they tend to grow back. In addition to salon clients who tan without eye protection, these are often seen on people who are outdoors in the sun a lot and don't wear sunglasses, such

continued on p. 154 ☺



Can you see the number?

continued from p. 62

as fishermen, farmers and construction workers.

Pinguecula: Often caused by UV over-exposure and similar to a pterygium, this mostly appears as a dot or bump on the white of the eye. Although rarely requiring surgery, if a pinguecula bump gets too large, it may require removal.

Basal Cell Carcinoma: There are almost a million cases of basal cell carcinoma every year. Believed to be caused by UV over-exposure, it most often appears on

Squamous Cell Carcinoma: This is a more serious form of skin cancer, although rarely fatal. It is believed to be caused by UV over-exposure on thin skin, such as the skin around the eye, and should be examined by a medical professional if suspected.

Macular Degeneration: Macular degeneration is a common disease that weakens part of the inner eye and eventually leads to blindness. Although caused by many factors, UV over-exposure contributes to this disease.


I hope you now understand why the answer to the eye protection question is always, "YES!"

the thinnest skin on the body, such as the eyelid. There are several forms, but it often appears as a sore that won't heal or a red, raised bump. This requires medical attention.

Cataracts: A "clouding over" of the lens of the eye, cataracts are the leading cause of blindness worldwide. Luckily,

there are surgical procedures available in the U.S. that will restore sight. Although cataracts can be caused by other things, the main factor is UV over-exposure. While it typically takes decades of sun exposure

to create cataracts, they are being more frequently diagnosed in younger people.

Remember, all the eye damage described here can be caused by unprotected UV exposure, indoors or outdoors. So, wear your UV-block sunglasses when outside and your FDA-compliant eye protection while tanning indoors! And as to the question, "Do I really need to wear eye protection when I tan?" ... I hope you now understand why the answer is always, "YES!" 



Tanning industry veteran Brenda Fishbaugh is president of Eye Pro, Inc., makers of disposable eyewear. She travels extensively training salons on the effects of UV light on vision.



insurtec
Tanning Insurance

Your insurance company is a very important cog in defending the tanning industry and we take this responsibility seriously. At Insurtec, we know we are one of the first lines of defense against fraudulent claims against tanning salons and we work hard to keep a clean bill of health for our industry. We have been working with tanning salons for over 20 years and we probably have more experience adjusting claims than anyone in the industry. Our web site, www.insurtecinc.com, is the most extensive tanning insurance site on the web, giving you access to online quotations and loads of information to help you research what makes tanning insurance different from regular business insurance.

We believe in simple applications, affordable solutions, quick quotations and developing a personal relationship with each of our clients. Give us a call for a quote. You'll be glad you did.

(800)606-0621
PO Box 25 - Rich Hill, MO 64779
www.insurtecinc.com

proud member
ITA INDOOR TANNING ASSOCIATION
Promoting Responsible Sun Care and Sun Burn Prevention.