Protect Your Eyes from the Sun

Most of us understand the importance of protecting our skin from the sun’s harmful rays, but did you know that damage from the sun can lead to serious short-term and long-term eye problems? OCB eye doctors would like to remind patients about the importance of shielding your eyes when outdoors.

In the short term, exposure to UV rays can lead to photokeratitis, which can damage the eye in a matter of hours, causing redness, blurry vision, and even temporary vision loss. Long-term sun exposure has been linked to an increased risk of cataracts, macular degeneration, benign growths on or near the eye, and cancer.

“These conditions take many years to develop but the damage can accumulate over time if you are not in the habit of protecting your eyes,” said OCB cornea specialist Nicoletta Fynn-Thompson, MD.

Although it is considered rare, sun exposure can also increase the risk of developing ocular melanoma in those who are genetically predisposed.

“Your eyes have three layers, and most ocular melanomas originate in the middle layer of your eye, so unlike a cancerous growth on your skin that you could see, you wouldn’t necessarily notice an ocular melanoma in the mirror,” said Dr. Fynn-Thompson. “There are no early symptoms, so these are very 

continued inside
The fix for droopy eyelids

As we get older, many of us come face to face in the mirror with drooping eyelids. The sagging may worsen over time, changing your appearance in an undesirable way, and it may impact your peripheral vision.

Age, as well as certain diseases, can impact the muscles and skin of the upper and lower eyelid in several ways. The drooping may come from a condition called ptosis, in which the muscles of the upper eyelids lose their strength and start to sag. Ptosis can be caused by diabetes or neuromuscular problems, but can also occur with aging. Another common eyelid problem is called dermatochalasis, in which excess skin of the upper eyelid sags to the point where the skin appears to bag, giving one a tired appearance. This too can impact your vision.

"With ptosis, the edge of the eyelid, where the lashes grow, may be crossing over your pupil to the point where it is blocking it, affecting your field of vision," explains OCB Ophthalmologist Victoria Starks, MD, who specializes in cosmetic and reconstructive surgery of the eye. “With dermatochalasis, the excess skin of the lid, rather than the lid itself, droops because it loses elasticity, creating skin folds that may hang over the lashes and cover the pupil. If these conditions affect your vision, you may try to unconsciously compensate by raising your eyebrows, which can lead to tension headaches.

“Both conditions, if severe enough, can impact driving, reading and one’s ability to function properly,” said Dr. Starks.

Your OCB ophthalmologist is able to determine whether ptosis or dermatochalasis or a combination of the two is impacting vision by taking measurements of the eyelid and the eye opening and performing a visual field test.

Eyelid surgery is an outpatient procedure that involves repairing the lid’s lifting muscle and removing excess skin or fat. The tiny incisions are typically concealed in naturally occurring creases of eyelid skin. Most insurance companies cover this procedure if the drooping eyelid is affecting your vision. Your OCB ophthalmologist will determine whether this procedure is cosmetic or medically necessary to give you improved vision. To learn more about OCB’s Oculoplastic and Cosmetic Care services, visit www.eyeboston.com/services/oculoplastics-cosmetic-care.
difficult to detect. An eye exam is the only way most ocular melanomas are discovered, so regular exams are very important.” Other tips include:

- Wear the proper sunglasses: Look for those labeled “UV400” or “100 percent UV protection” when buying sunglasses. Less costly sunglasses with this label are just as effective as the expensive brands. Oversized or wrap-around sunglasses provide the best coverage.
- Avoid staring at the sun: Directly gazing at the sun can burn holes in the retina, the light-sensitive layer of cells in the back of the eye needed for central vision. While rare, the damage is irreversible.
- Clouds don’t block UV light: The sun’s rays can pass through haze and clouds.
- Be extra careful in UV-intense conditions: Sunlight is strongest mid-day to early afternoon, at higher altitudes, and when reflected off of water, ice or snow.
- Don’t forget your hat: Consider wearing a hat with a broad brim. They have been shown to significantly cut exposure to harmful rays.

Dr. Iwamoto named Harvard College Women’s Center Mentor of the Year

OCB’s Mami Iwamoto, MD was recognized as the 2019 Mentor of the Year by the Harvard College Women’s Center for their Women in STEM Mentorship Program. The WiSTEM Mentor of the Year is recognized as a dedicated mentor whose insight and advice has proven an invaluable source of support and inspiration for their mentee as they explore their academic and career options in STEM. Congratulations Dr. Iwamoto!

Notice to Medicare Patients – Refraction cost increase

Medicare provides basic medical coverage, but it does not cover all medical expenses. Medicare does not cover the measurement for eyeglasses, known as a refraction.

If you wish to obtain a prescription for new eyeglasses, you will be charged for the eyeglass measurement.

Beginning July 1, OCB will charge $50 for a refraction if you pay prior to leaving the office, or $60 if you prefer to have us bill you. Although it is not covered by Medicare, keep in mind that a refraction does give your eye doctor important information about your vision and we do recommend this service.

The Medicare Coverage Manual Section 2320 states:

Eyeglasses, contacts, and eye examinations for the purpose of prescribing, fitting and changing eyeglasses; eye refractions; hearing aids and examinations for hearing aids; and immunizations are not covered.
Two Specialists Join OCB

OCB is pleased to welcome Laura Voicu, MD and Mina Farahani, MD, who are joining OCB’s team of eye care specialists in the fall. Both doctors specialize in the diagnosis and management of cornea disorders, external and ocular surface disease.

Laura Voicu, MD

Dr. Voicu completed fellowships in corneal and external eye diseases at the Doheny Eye Center at UCLA Medical Center and in glaucoma at the Jules Stein Eye Institute at UCLA. She earned her medical degree at Mount Sinai Hospital, completed her internship in internal medicine at Albert Einstein Medical Center, and her residency at Duke University Eye Center, where she served as Chief Resident. Prior to joining OCB, Dr. Voicu was Director of Cornea and External Diseases at Vold Vision in Arkansas. She enjoys helping patients restore their vision and specializes in the management of complex cases involving corneal disease and glaucoma. She will be seeing patients in Boston, Cambridge and Danvers.

Mina Farahani, MD

Dr. Farahani completed her fellowship training in cornea and refractive care at University of California, Irvine. She earned her medical degree from Chicago Medical School at Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine and she holds master of science degrees from RFU in health administration and in biomedical sciences. Dr. Farahani completed her internship at MacNeal Hospital, where she earned the Intern of the Year Award. She completed her ophthalmology residency training at John H. Stroger Jr. Hospital of Cook County in Chicago, where she was Chief Resident and received the Resident of the Year Award. She will be seeing patients in Boston, Cambridge and Danvers.