

## ULTRAVIOLET RADIATION



Dr. Perry Arndt

Many of us know about the damage ultraviolet (UV) rays can inflict on our bodies, but most Americans do not understand the true danger UV rays present to our eyes. Did you know that UV damage to the eyes is cumulative? That means the negative effects of UV radiation many of us encountered throughout our lifetimes, are still with us today.

***Did you know that extended exposure to the sun (UV Rays) not only can cause skin cancer, but also can damage your vision?***

Studies have shown that long-term exposure to ultraviolet radiation can increase the risks for many eye diseases. Here are four that are commonly linked to UV exposure.

**Pterygium**-(*tuh-rij-ee-um*) a growth of tissue on the white of the eye that may extend onto the clear cornea where it can block vision. It can be removed surgically, but often recurs, and can cause cosmetic concerns and vision loss if untreated.

**Photokeratitis**- essentially, a reversible sunburn of the cornea resulting from excessive UV-B exposure. It can be extremely painful for 1-2 days and can result in temporary loss of vision. There is some indication that long-term exposure to UV-B can result in corneal and conjunctival degenerative changes.

**Cataract**- a major cause of visual impairment and blindness worldwide. Cataracts are a cloudiness of the lens inside the eye that develops over a period of many years. Studies have shown a link between UV exposure and cataract formation. Furthermore, studies have shown that certain types of cataract are associated with a history of higher ocular exposure to UV and especially UV-B radiation.

(There is also speculation that UV exposure may be linked with Macular Degeneration.)

Fortunately, eye protection doesn't have to be expensive to be effective. Quality sunglasses should block out 99-100 percent of both UV-A and UV-B radiation and prices vary. For UV protection in everyday eyewear, there are several options like UV-blocking lens treatments, polycarbonate lenses and photochromic lenses.

Dr. Perry Arndt is an Optometrist at HealthView Eye Care Center-Medford. For more information on UltraViolet Radiation and your eyes, you can contact him at (715)748-2020 or 866-748-2020.