

Children should wear sunglasses when outside

June 3 2009, By Beth Whitehouse

How important is it for my child to wear sunglasses?

The long-term effects of excessive sunlight aren't seen early in life -- they show up when people are 60 or 70 years old and experience macular degeneration or [cataract](#) issues, says Steven Schiff, an optometrist in Deer Park, N.Y.

Just as parents want to protect their children from [skin cancer](#) by putting [sunscreen](#) on them, parents should protect children's eyes by getting them in the habit of wearing sunglasses outdoors. "Some children are easier to convince than others," Schiff says. Emphasize the importance of sunglasses by the time their children are 5 or so, he says.

Most sunglasses labeled 100 percent UV protection, and preferably 100 percent both UVA and UVB protection, are the best bet.

One mistake [parents](#) make is having [children](#) don the shades only when they are going to the beach. If a child is outside playing sports or at a park, the eyes should be protected then as well, Schiff says.

An elastic strap that holds the glasses to the head or a looser-fitting strap that keeps the glasses around the neck when they're removed will help. Of course, a cord should not be used with a toddler's sunglasses.

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