Choosing the right sunglasses

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(HealthDay)—You might think of eye problems like cataracts as signs of old age, but one step you can take now will protect your vision for the future—and you can do it with style.

We're talking about sunglasses.

Your eyes need to be protected from the dangers of UV light the same way your skin does. And just like your skin, it's protection you need every day, not just when you're at the beach.

Eye doctors recommend wearing your shades anytime you're outside, although they are extra important in summer and in winter on snowy terrain and at high altitudes. They're also a must any time you're on medication that increases sun sensitivity.

Style aside, the most effective are large wraparound sunglasses that absorb 100 percent of UV rays, according to the American Academy of Ophthalmology.

For durability and the best visibility, look for scratch-resistant polycarbonate plastic. Polarized lenses will help reduce brightness and glare for better vision, though this doesn't contribute to UV protection. Also, lens color on its own doesn't indicate any degree of protection—black, gray, green, amber, this is more a matter of personal preference as long as the lenses are properly coated for UV protection.

A simple test to evaluate sunglasses is to hold them a few inches from your face as you look at a rectangular pattern, like a tile floor or brick wall. Cover one eye and move the glasses up and down and side to side. If the lines wiggle, keep shopping.

Also be aware of claims that may not hold water. The verdict is still out on whether blue and infrared light blocking is helpful.

  More information: The American Academy of Ophthalmology has more tips on choosing the best sunglasses.

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