

Eye protection crucial for all ages

By Michelle Healy, Reno Gazette-Journal

If you've heeded the health messages to protect your skin by covering up and slathering on the sunblock, you're taking important steps to playing it safe in the sun.



But you'll come up short if you don't also wear sunglasses and a hat to protect your eyes from harmful ultraviolet rays, health experts say.

"Most people are not aware that long-term exposure to sunlight, with its ultraviolet wavelengths, can be very damaging to the eyes," says Lee Duffner, an ophthalmologist in Hollywood, Fla., and spokesman for the American Academy of Ophthalmology.

Although there's considerable public awareness about UV light's ability to burn and age the skin, awareness of its effect on the eyes has "fallen in the shadows," says optometry professor Jan Bergmanson of the University of Houston College of Optometry, founding director of the Texas Eye Research and Technology Center.

A 2009 survey by the American Optometric Association found that one in three adults are unaware of the eye health risks of spending too much time in the sun without proper protection.

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