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The Sun and Your Eyes: What You Need to Know

UV protection. Not just for skin.

Did you know it's just as important to protect your eyes from the sun's harmful rays as it is to shield your skin? The intense ultraviolet (UV) rays of the sun can damage sensitive cells in the eyes, eventually affecting vision. Experts say it is difficult to isolate the exact amount of damage that UV radiation imposes on the eye over a long period. However, a number of studies have shown that the effects build up and may increase the chance of developing eye problems later in life. These problems may include cataracts, a clouding of the lens of the eye. Cataracts are a leading cause of reduced vision in the United States in people age 60 and older, according to the National Eye Institute.

Eye damage in the short term is possible

It can take years before you experience any of the sun's damage on your eyes. However, some damage can occur in the short term, such as photokeratitis and photoconjunctivitis, an inflammation of the membrane outside of the eye (think pinkeye). If you feel tired, sore and gritty after a day at the beach, skiing or boating, you may experience UV radiation exposure.

More sun protection is better

More is better when it comes to protecting your eyes from the sun, according to eye experts. If you're planning to be out in the sun, you can protect your eyes with a combination of quality sunglasses, UV blocking contact lenses and a wide-brimmed hat. For more information, talk to your eye care professional today, who'll help you choose the right eyewear for you to help you enjoy the great outdoors even more.

Source: Eyemed Vision Care

Keep Your Head Above Water This Summer

Summer is a great time to cool off with a swim in the pool, or at the lake or beach. While enjoying summertime fun, don't forget safety. Drowning is ranked the fifth leading cause of accidental injury in the U.S.

Stay afloat this summer with these drowning prevention tips:

- Learn life-saving skills, such as CPR.
- Install a pool fence.
- Swim with a buddy.
- Avoid alcohol when swimming or supervising children.
- Watch the weather forecast before engaging in water activities.
- Wear a life jacket at the beach or lake and at the pool if you are a poor swimmer.
- Obey beach warning signs and avoid strong waves or currents.
- Remove floats and toys from the pool and deck when not in use so children won't be tempted to enter the pool area when no one is watching.

Know the basics of swimming and take lessons if needed. Studies show that children ages 1 to 4 years old lower their risk of drowning by 88% when they take formal swimming lessons.

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Doctor, Retail Clinic, Urgent Care or ER?

Sometimes it's easy to know when you should go to an emergency room (ER), such as when you have severe chest pain or unstoppable bleeding. At other times, it's less clear. Where do you go when you have an ear infection, or are generally not feeling well? The emergency room can be an expensive option. Know when to use each for non-emergency treatment.

Care Option	Hours	Description
Doctor's Office	Office hours vary	Your doctor's office is generally the best place to go for non-emergency care such as health exams, colds, flu, sore throats and minor injuries.
Retail Health Clinics	Similar to retail store hours	Walk-in clinics are often located in stores and pharmacies to provide convenient, low-cost treatment for minor medical problems such as: ear infections, athlete's foot, bronchitis and some vaccinations.
Urgent Care Provider	Generally includes evenings, weekends and holidays	Urgent care centers can provide care when your doctor is not available and you don't have a true emergency, but need immediate care. For example, they can treat sprained ankles, fevers, and minor cuts and injuries.
Emergency Room (ER)	24 hours, seven days a week	For medical emergencies, call 911.
24/7 Nurseline 866-412-8795 Press Option 3	The Blue Cross Blue Shield 24/7 Nurseline can: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help you decide if you should call your doctor, go to the ER or treat the problem yourself • Answer many of your health-related questions • Help you understand your condition Available 24 hours day, seven days a week	

Deciding Where to Go - Doctor, Retail Clinic, Urgent Care or ER?

	Retail Health Clinic	Walk-in Doctor's Office	Urgent Care Center	Emergency Room
Who usually provides care	Physician assistant or nurse practitioner	Primary care doctor	Internal medicine, family practice, pediatric and ER doctor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any life-threatening or disabling conditions • Sudden or unexplained loss of consciousness • Chest pain; Numbness in the face, arm or leg; difficulty speaking • Severe shortness of breath • High fever with stiff neck mental confusion or difficulty in breathing • Coughing up or vomiting blood • Cut or wound that won't stop bleeding • Major injuries • Possible broken bones <p><i>Keep the emergency room available for emergencies and keep more money in your pocket.</i></p>
Sprains, strains			■	
Animal bites			■	
X-rays			■	
Stitches			■	
Mild asthma		■	■	
Minor headaches		■	■	
Back pain		■	■	
Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea	■	■	■	
Minor allergic reactions	■	■	■	
Cough, sore throat	■	■	■	
Bumps, cuts, scrapes	■	■	■	
Rashes, minor burns	■	■	■	
Minor fevers, colds	■	■	■	
Ear or sinus pain	■	■	■	
Vaccinations	■	■	■	

If you need emergency care, call 911 or seek help from any doctor or hospital. Visit bcbsil.com for more information or to find a provider.

Source: Blue Cross Blue Shield

Stay in the Game with Prostate Cancer Screenings

“Prostate cancer is the most common male malignancy...”

Whether you're playing football, baseball or basketball, a smart game plan can make a difference in whether you win or lose. And the same holds true for your health. By having a wellness plan that includes regular prostate cancer screening, you can increase your odds of beating one of your toughest opponents.

Prostate cancer is the most common male malignancy diagnosed in the United States, with an estimated 189,000 new cases each year. Fortunately, the disease is highly treatable and curable when detected early, and the five-year survival rate for early stage prostate cancer can be as high as 99 percent.

Men age 50 and older who have at least a 10-year life expectancy would benefit from intervention and treatment and should have a prostate-specific antigen (PSA) and digital rectal examination (DRE) annually. Currently, African-American men have the highest incidence of prostate cancer in the world - 137 per 100,000 per year. So, if you are African-American, or are younger than 50 and have a strong family history of the disease, you'll want to talk with your physician about a screening schedule that's tailored for you.

Don't let life throw you a curve ball. Safeguard your health by scheduling regular prostate cancer screenings with your physician, or by checking with your local hospital or the Internet for free screenings available in your area.

Source: Blue Cross Blue Shield

It's Never Too Soon for Good Health

Early Care for Your Children's Teeth Will Protect Their Smile and Health for Now and the Future

Start cleaning early

As soon as the child's first tooth appears, begin cleaning by wiping with a clean, damp cloth every day. Switch to a small, soft toothbrush when more teeth come in. Start using fluoride toothpaste when the child is two unless your child's doctor or dentist recommends it earlier.

Supervise brushing

Brush your child's teeth twice a day until your child has the skill to handle the toothbrush alone. Then make sure he or she is doing a thorough job by continuing to watch closely. As long as you're standing there, why not pick up a brush and join in? Foaming at the mouth together can be fun, and your child will pick up on your good habits.

Promote healthy eating and drinking habits

Put only water in your baby's bottle at bedtime or naptime. Milk, formula, juices, and other drinks contain sugar. Prolonged exposure to sugary drinks while the baby sleeps - when saliva flow is reduced - increases the risk of tooth decay.

Talk to your child's doctor or dentist

The American Dental Association recommends taking children to the dentist before their first birthday. Check with the doctor or dentist about your child's specific needs. After two years old, most children get the right amount of fluoride to prevent cavities if they drink fluoridated water and use the right amount of fluoride toothpaste twice a day.

Source: Guardian Life



“Brush your child's teeth twice a day until your child has the skill...”