

The Eyes Have It

Everyone knows that you're really hot stuff when you put on a pair of your favorite shades. But looks can be deceiving and you may actually be doing yourself more harm than good.

Scientists are discovering that the ultraviolet rays which can damage the skin can also damage the eyes over time. Degenerative diseases, such as cataracts, may be caused by long-term exposure to sunlight. Sunglasses reduce the overall amount of light that reaches the eye causing the pupils to dilate (enlarge). However, if the sunglasses don't filter out the ultraviolet rays, the wearer is actually allowing more of the harmful rays to enter the eye than if she or he had left their shades at home. This is why doctors are now recommending sunglasses with ultraviolet (UV) filters.

Fortunately you don't have to fork out big bucks to protect yourself. About half of all over-the-counter sunglasses being sold today include a UV filter. A cheap pair will do the same job as designer glasses as long as they both have the UV filter. Check the label to be sure and have a healthy summer in the sun!

Jill Winklesky
Fitness Peer Health Advisor



WATCH OUT FOR GIARDIA

Ah... the wilderness! It's so nice to escape to the mountains and get away from modern society. In the wild you can get exercise and relax in mother nature's pure and serene surroundings.

Now two weeks later, you're back from your vacation. One morning you wake up with diarrhea, painful cramps, sulfurous belching, nausea, and fatigue. What's going on? Is some Scotsman playing his bagpipes in your stomach?

The wilderness was not as pure as it was serene. There is a new "jaws" in the water, but this one has suction cups instead of teeth. Its name is giardia and it is a single-celled organism which has become a major water-borne disease in the United States. In the water, giardia takes the form of a cyst. Once ingested, it has an incubation period of about two weeks before it becomes symptomatic.

Humans as well as many domestic and wild animals are its host and can spread it to just about any water supply. Once active in the body's system, giardia thrives in the upper small intestine, sharing your partially digested food, multiplying very quickly, and remaining in place with its suction cup shape.

Giardia can become so numerous on the intestinal wall that it resembles the pile on carpet. Eventually the suction on the cells gives out and the cells develop into cysts that are passed out of the body. This process, if left untreated, can go on for years. Once giardia enters your body, appropriate medical treatment must be obtained to completely rid your body of the organism.

A final note of precaution, purifying the water with chlorine, iodine or halazone tablets is not a sure way to kill giardia. Water must be boiled for at least 10 minutes or, ideally, run through a true purifying filter (3 micron). So, be careful, happy, prepared campers, and until next time -- Adios amoebas!

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