

Solar Eclipse Eye Safety

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What is a solar eclipse?

When the moon moves between the sun and the earth and completely blocks the sun.

Why do I have to wear proper solar eyeglasses?

Because the exposure to the light without wearing approved solar eclipse glasses could destroy eye cells in the retina (the back of the eye) that transmits what you see to the brain.

What happens when you look at the eclipse without proper glasses?

Solar retinopathy – also called eclipse blindness or retinal burns which causes loss of central vision and is diagnosed by an ophthalmologist looking into the eye with a special lens in their office. They may see a small, yellow, round, damaged area.

Distorted vision – unable to see shapes correctly

Altered color vision

Can I wear sunglasses to look at the solar eclipse?

NO. These glasses will not protect your eyes.

Will I feel pain if I look at the solar eclipse without the proper glasses?

No. You will not feel pain at the time of viewing the eclipse. This is because there are no pain-sensing nerves in the retina. However, hours after the event, you may experience watery eyes and/or difficulty in seeing shapes and details of objects.

What are the symptoms of solar retinopathy?

Mild: watery eyes, headaches, sensitivity to light, eye floaters

More severe: blurred vision, distorted vision (straight lines appear rounded), objects appear smaller than they actually are, a blind spot in your line of sight.

In a few cases, solar retinopathy can cause blindness.

How long does it take to get solar retinopathy?

You may notice first signs of solar retinopathy within hours of direct exposure to the sun's light.

Can solar retinopathy heal?

If the case is mild, typically symptoms of vision problems can resolve on their own over time. It could take up to three-six months to heal. Seeing an eye doctor for checkups is recommended.

If you have symptoms:

1. Make an appointment with an eye doctor right away for an exam
2. If you have sensitivity to light, avoid sources of bright light (including screens and sunshine)
3. Wear sunglasses to protect your eyes (if you need them indoors during the school day, a physician's note will be required)
4. You may take over-the-counter medications such as Tylenol, Advil, Motrin if your physician or pharmacist recommends this to relieve headaches and any eye soreness. Always check with your physician before taking any medications.

Please remember:

Solar retinopathy is preventable! It is a smart idea to protect your eyes by wearing the approved solar eclipse eyewear. Once you have a retinal burn, there is no other treatment except time to see if the retina will heal itself. Your eye doctor will determine if healing is occurring.

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IISD Clinic and Health Services
Karyn Beauchamp, RN
Director of Clinic and Health Services