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5 things you need to know

Buying sunglasses

By Janet Reese

1 Look for a label that specifically promises 99% to 100% UV protection. "It's especially important to wear sunglasses midday and at higher altitudes, where the UV light is more intense. UV rays pass through haze and thin clouds," says ophthalmologist Wayne Bizer, a spokesman for the American Academy of Ophthalmology. Sunglasses should block both UVA and UVB radiation. A label that reads "UV protection up to 400nm" usually indicates 100% UV protection.

2 Choose polarized lenses that eliminate reflected glare -- sunlight that bounces off smooth surfaces such as pavement or water. "You can buy a quality pair of sunglasses with UV and glare protection for \$35 to \$50. Higher price doesn't always mean better quality," says optician Rene Soltis, who is the director of education and training for the Vision Council of America.

3 A medium-tinted lens is good for day-to-day wear, but if you use the glasses for very bright conditions, select a dark tint. Gray and green-gray are popular general-purpose tints that reduce glare while maintaining natural colors.

4 Choose large-framed, close-fitting, wraparound glasses that are comfortable, Soltis says. And they should look good on you. Wraparound glasses are shaped to keep light from shining around the frames and into your eyes.

5 Plastic lenses are less likely to shatter than glass. Some sunglasses use polycarbonate plastic, which is a special material that is strong but can be easily scratched. Look for polycarbonate lenses with scratch-resistant coatings. All sunglasses must meet impact standards set by the FDA for safety, but no lens is truly unbreakable.