



**MISSISSIPPI STATE UNIVERSITY™**  
MS AGRICULTURAL AND FORESTRY  
EXPERIMENT STATION

# MAFES DAWG TRACKS

We normally think about using sunscreen to protect our skin when outside for an extended length of time, but don't overlook the damage sun can do to your eyes too.

The hazard is from over exposure to the sun's UV radiation, damaging the eye's surface tissues, cornea and lens. Some of this damage may not reveal itself until years later and can cause several eye diseases and problems.

- Cataracts
- Eye cancers
- Growths on the eye, such as pterygium
- A form of photokeratitis, better known as snow blindness, can quickly develop after exposure to UV reflections off of snow, ice, sand or water.

UV levels are three times greater in summer than winter, but damage to your eyes can occur in any season. Even though it may not be as bright outside, clouds do not block the sun's UV light. So, take precautions no matter what time of the year.

✓ **Choose sunglasses that provide 100% UV or UV400 protection, or block both UV-A and UV-B rays.**

- UV-A can hurt your central vision. It can damage the macula, a part of the retina at the back of your eye.
- The front part of your eye (the cornea and the lens) absorbs most UV-B rays, but these rays may cause even more damage to your eyes than UV-A rays.

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✓ **Wear a broad-brimmed hat along a with your sunglasses.**

Also be aware ...

- Sunlight is strongest midday to early afternoon, at higher altitudes, and when reflected off of water, sand, pavement, ice or snow.
- Never look directly at the sun. Doing so at any time, including during an eclipse, can damage the eye's retina and cause a serious injury known as solar retinopathy.
- Tanning beds pose the same risks to your eyes and body as outdoor UV light.

 *Now go out and get yourself some big black frames*  
*With the glass so dark they won't even know your name* 

1985 interview with Spin magazine regarding Cheap Sunglasses ...

ZZ Top bass player Dusty Hill explained:

"We wrote that song when we used to tour in cars. And every gas station in the world had a cardboard display of the cheapest and ugliest sunglasses you could imagine. I have bought a thousand pair of them." Guitarist Billy Gibbons added: "The hip trip for us was to throw them into the audience as an offering...We had to take a bad rap from an optometrist who said



'Don't wear ZZ Top's cheap sunglasses. They're bad for your eyes.' There was an optometrist's convention in Hawaii and there was a huge poster – this woman with a pointing finger saying, 'Don't wear cheap sunglasses.' I suppose I'll have to agree."

Pic from Jeff Topping for The New York Times

**Sources:**

<https://www.aao.org/eye-health/tips-prevention/sun>

<https://www.eyehandhealth.com/blog/uv-eye-damage-health-risks>

<https://www.songfacts.com/facts/zz-top/cheap-sunglasses>